DOCTOR
WHO

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DOCTOR WHO

AND SHADA

Based on the BBC television serial by Douglas Adams PAUL SCOONES

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the New Zealand

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Respectfully dedicated to the memory of

Douglas Adams and Graham Williams

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Author's Note

Of all the many serials that were developed by the BBC Doctor Who production office but, for one reason or another, never made it to our television screens Shada is perhaps the most deserving of recognition as an 'official' Doctor Who story. It was not through an in-ability to make the scripts work, or a failure to fit in with the direction of the series that kept this story from a television broadcast. Had the story not been pulled due to industrial action after over a third had been filmed or recorded, Shada would certainly have taken its rightful place as the final, six-part story of the seventeenth season, broadcast following The Horns of Nimon.

It is in recognition of this story's unique status - as one that should have been part of the television series - that it has been included in this set of novelisations covering the television serials that have not been published by either Target Books or Virgin Publishing.

Readers noticing certain similarities between names, locations and dialogue appearing in this book and in Douglas Adams' 1987 novel Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency should be aware that Shada came first. Adams never permitted Target to novelise this (or his other two stories: The Pirate Planet and City of Death) and later reused aspects of his Doctor Who stories in his original fiction..

Shada was originally the first novelisation produced as part of this set of five books. I first attempted an adaptation in the mid-eighties, working from the detailed 'Archive' syn-opsis in Doctor Who Monthly issue 81 (October 1983). In 1988 Jon Preddle transcribed a video reconstruction of the surviving scenes linked with text from the scripts that had been produced by UK fans. The novelisation, adapted from Jon's transcript, was published in 1989, launching this series of books covering the 'unnovelised' stories.

Later, the acquisition of copies of the rehearsal scripts (the same version of the scripts that were subsequently reproduced in the 1992 BBC Video Shada box set) prompted a complete rewrite, published in 1991.

For this new version (produced ten years to the month after the previous edition), I have taken the opportunity to revise the book, incorporating a large number of minor changes.

Many grateful thanks are due to Jon Preddle for his invaluable help and advice with all three editions of this book.

Paul Scoones

October 2001

Prologue

The space station revolved slowly in orbit around a large red sun in a system devoid of planetary bodies. The station was a simple construction consisting of a hexagonal hub joined to an outer circular ring by three struts. This was Think Tank, the research station of the Institute for Advanced Science Studies.

The station was occupied by just six men, each a top-ranked intellectual in their chosen field of scientific study. The six distinguished scientists were at present all participating in an experiment that was taking place in a chamber located at the very centre of the station's hub.

The men were sitting silently and motionlessly; eyes closed and their arms resting by their sides. They were seated in contoured couches positioned against each side of a large hexagonal white cone. On the apex of the cone rested a dull, silver-grey sphere, slightly larger than a basketball.

Five of the men were each dressed in plain white tunics and trousers. The front of each of the tunics was decorated with a symbol consisting of a black triangle inside a coloured circle. The sixth man's clothes lacked the symbol, singling him out from his colleagues.

His high forehead, square jaw-line and a scar, running down his right cheek, also marked him out as somehow different. He seemed to possess a particular air of arrogance and su-periority.

For some time now, the six scientists had remained at rest. The tableau was marred only by the faint yet audible hum of the computer banks positioned against the walls of the chamber, and the constant clicking of a large electronic countdown display mounted on the wall. The timer was counting down seconds, displayed as Roman numerals: '… XXX, XXIX, XXVIII, XXVII, XXVI…'

With fifteen seconds left on the counter, the man who was different reacted suddenly.

His eyes snapped open and, burning with a powerful intelligence, explored everything within his field of vision although his head remained motionless. His gaze finally came to rest on the counter as the final few seconds clicked away: '… V, IV, III, III, II, I…'

At the moment the countdown reached zero, lights on the computer consoles came on, and the other five men immediately began to tremble violently. Their faces contorted in silent screams as their bodies endured terrible spasms. Despite their paroxysms, the five remained fixed in their seats, their backs pressed to the cone as if glued in place.

The sixth man remained calm and relaxed, apparently unconcerned for the plight of his colleagues. He carefully got to his feet and impassively studied his colleagues as they continued to writhe in silent agony. He moved across to a computer console and

flicked an array of switches. Immediately, the men stopped shaking and slumped in their seats.

The timer was still clicking away, only now it was counting up: '… XXV, XXVI, XXVII…'

A thin, confused babble of voices filled the room originating from the sphere positioned above the five scientists' heads. A hint of a satisfied smile played briefly across the 5

sixth man's features. With brisk efficiency, he performed a cursory check on each of the men before crossing to another console and operated more controls. The babbling abruptly ceased. Then he moved back the first console and abruptly ripped out a number of fuses and cables in a brief shower of sparks. The counter halted.

The man then turned his attention to the sphere. He stretched out his right arm and the sphere rose from its perch, and hovered across the room to settle on his palm. He smiled once more, and then strode out of the chamber through a sliding door.

As the door hissed shut behind him, a pre-programmed sequence on the console activated, and a voice blared from a small speaker. 'This is a recorded message. The Institute for Advanced Science Studies is under strict quarantine. Do not approach. Do not approach. Everything is under our control.' The recording briefly fell silent, then, after a thirty second pause, repeated itself: 'This is a recorded message...

Holding the sphere, the man strode purposefully along a passageway within one of the station's three connecting struts, then along a curved white walled corridor in the station's outer ring. He stopped at a door marked 'Shuttle Craft'. The door opened to reveal a large hangar bay housing a sleek silver spacecraft. The man boarded the ship via a ramp, which then retracted into the hull.

On the upper surface of a section of the space station's outer ring, a hatch slid back and the spacecraft rose to the surface of the station on an elevator platform. The craft disengaged from the station and swooped gracefully away from the proximity of the space wheel. A cluster of engines at the rear of the ship fired, and it shot away into the distance with a fan-tastic spurt of speed.

In the central chamber, the five remaining scientists came to life. They rose to their feet with difficulty, and unsteadily attempted to walk, staggering and stumbling around the chamber, oblivious to the repeating quarantine message playing on in the background. One of the men lost his balance and collapsed in an uncoordinated heap on the floor. The others continued their macabre dance, failing to even acknowledge his plight. They appeared to be unaware of either each other or their surroundings. It was as though they had lost their minds.

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Professor Chronotis

On a bright if not particularly warm October day a young man wearing jeans and a pale-coloured jacket cycled up to the gates of St Cedd's, one of the colleges of England's Cambridge University. Slowing to a halt, he dismounted and parked his bicycle in the racks before walking into First Court. He pulled a scrap of paper from his pocket, and checked the room number scrawled on it. Looking around purposefully, he walked on into Second Court, where he approached a passer-by.

'Excuse me. Do you know where P-14 is?' he inquired.

'Yes - it's over there,' answered the passer-by, indicating the second floor of the old, ivy-covered building in the far corner of the courtyard.

The young man thanked the passer-by and hurried off.

An elderly man opened the front door of his rooms and entered a large wood-panelled study, containing a collection of well-worn antique furniture. Sturdy bookshelves lined the walls, crammed to capacity with untidy rows of dusty, leather-bound volumes of varying sizes and colours. A table was also stacked high with books and papers.

Pushing a pile of papers aside, the old man set his leather brief case down on the table and removed a slim brown paper package from it. He tipped up his case and emptied a clutter of files crammed with papers on to the table. Several slipped off onto the floor, and he let them stay there.

The old man removed his coat, hat and scarf. Beneath these garments he wore a grey tweed suit that had evidently seen better decades. Apart from a few grey wisps, his hair and thick beard were white and his face and hands were deeply lined with the passage of time. Small, half- frame glasses rested on the end of his beaky nose.

His attention was suddenly drawn to an unusual object. He peered over his half-frames at the battered blue police box that incongruously occupied one corner of the room. He grunted slightly and, clearly not at all put out by its presence, then turned his attention to the brown paper package in his hands. After a moment's consideration, he placed the par-cel carefully on the table and wandered off to the adjoining kitchen.

As he was about to leave the room, there was a knock at the front door. ‘Come in!’ the old man called, and continued into his kitchen.

The door opened and the young man entered, momentarily glancing up at the number on the door to reassure him that this was indeed room P-14. He looked into the room just in time to glimpse the old man’s back as he retreated into the kitchen.

‘Excuse the muddle,’ the old man called to him. ‘Creative disarray, you know.’

The young man looked around the study clearly bemused. ‘Professor Chronotis?’ he ventured, after some hesitation.

‘Tea?’ came the reply from the kitchen.

‘Oh. Yes, thanks.’

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The old man, Professor Chronotis, shuffled back into the study. ‘Just put the kettle on,’

he explained kindly, rubbing his hands together.

‘Er, Professor Chronotis,’ the young man continued uneasily, ‘I don’t know if you remember me. We met at a faculty party a few weeks ago. It’s Chris Parsons.’

‘Oh yes, yes,’ the Professor nodded, and shook the young student’s hand. ‘Enjoy those faculty do’s, do you?’

Chris Parsons shrugged noncommittally. ‘Well, you know...’

‘Lots of boring old dons talking away at each other, never listen to a word any-body else says.’

‘Well, yes,’ Chris agreed. ‘You said that...’

‘Talk, talk, talk,’ Chronotis continued. ‘Never listen.’

‘No, well... I hope I’m not taking up your valuable…’

‘Time?’ the Professor ventured. ‘No, no. When you get to my age, you’ll find that time doesn’t matter too much. Not that I expect you will get to my age,’ he added, and stooped to lift a handful of books from a nearby table.

‘Oh really?’ Chris humoured him.

Chronotis looked up from studying the book titles. ‘Yes. I remember saying to the last Master of College but one, young Professor Frencham... or was it the last but two? May have been three.’

‘Three,’ echoed Chris, slightly surprised.

The Professor continued unperturbed by his listener’s scepticism. ‘Yes. Nice young chap. Died rather tragically at the age of ninety. Run over by a coach and pair.’

‘What was it you said to him?’ Chris persisted.

‘Oh, I don’t know. Long time ago you know.’

‘Yes,’ replied Chris doubtfully, and decided it was high time he steered the conversation back towards the reason for his visit. ‘Er, Professor, when we met, you were kind enough to say that if I dropped round, you would lend me some of your books on carbon dating.’

‘Oh yes. Happy to.’ The kettle whistled from the kitchen and the Professor dumped his handful of books back on the table. ‘Ah, there’s the kettle.’ He shuffled off into the kitchen. ‘You’ll find the books you want at the far end of the bookshelf. Third shelf down.’

Chris called out his thanks, and made for the bookshelves. He paused momentarily, taking in for the first time the police box standing in the corner of the room. He stared at it in complete bewilderment for a moment, and then recalled his real purpose. Chris counted three shelves down the bookshelves and pulled out a book from the end of the row. He flicked through the pages briefly and noticed that it was written in an entirely unrecognisable text. He was about to return it to the shelf when it occurred to him that it was far too light for its size and thickness.

The Professor’s voice drifted through from the kitchen. ‘Or is it the second shelf down? Second, I think. Anyway, take what you want.’

Chris looked up one shelf, and immediately spied the titles he sought. Nodding with satisfaction, he pulled out two volumes.

‘Milk?’ called the Professor from the kitchen.

‘Oh,’ said Chris, suddenly remembering the offer of tea. ‘Yes please.’

‘One lump or two?’

‘Two, please.’

‘Sugar?’

‘What?’ said Chris, startled.

The Professor came back in, carrying a laden tea tray, and chuckling to himself at his little joke. ‘Ah, here we are,’ he said, putting the tray down on a table.

Chris had a sudden vision of being trapped with the Professor all afternoon listening to him ramble on. He glanced at his watch. ‘Oh, actually Professor, I’ve just realised I’m going to be really late for a seminar. I’m terribly sorry. Look, I’ll bring these back to you next week, is that all right?’ he inquired, holding up the books.

The Professor waved the question aside. ‘Yes of course. Well, goodbye then.’

‘Goodbye.’ Chris started towards the door.

Chronotis retrieved up his brown paper package from the table, and pulled out a second-hand copy of The Time Machine by H.G. Wells, a book he’d bought in the town that morning.

‘Er, actually Professor,’ said Chris, pausing by the door, ‘can I ask you, where did you get that?’ He pointed at the police box.

The Professor gave the large blue box careful consideration over his half frame spectacles. ‘That? I don’t know. I think someone must have left it there whilst I was out.’

He seemed to be perfectly happy with this explanation, so Chris resisted the temptation to pursue the matter further. ‘Yes, well… I’ll bring these back as soon as I can.’

The Professor shrugged as the door closed behind Chris. The Professor sat down in his favourite armchair, poured himself a cup of tea, and began to read his book.

“The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us...”

‘Wordsworth! Rutherford, Christopher Smart, Andrew Marvell, Judge Jefferies, Owen Chadwick...’

‘Who?’ inquired Romana, looking up from her book.

‘Owen Chadwick,’ the Doctor repeated, as if this should be explanation enough in itself. ‘Oh yes, some of the greatest labourers in Earth’s history have served here.’ He punc-tuated his assertion with a sweeping gesture that took in the elegant old university buildings, and dangerously rocked the punt in which they were travelling. Romana gripped the sides of the shallow boat, nervously eyeing the murky waters of the Cam.

The Doctor seemed unconcerned. He gazed along the banks of the river with fond memories of previous visits. They were punting along a section of the River Cam known as the Backs, so-called because the river ran between the rear sections of many

of the colleges that comprised Cambridge University. On either side, green lawns sloped up to the backs of elegant old university buildings, partly covered in ivy. A profusion of willow trees lined the riverbank in large clumps.

‘Newton, of course,’ said Romana, adding to the Doctor’s list of names.

‘Oh yes, definitely Newton,’ the Doctor agreed, recalling how he had once climbed a tree to drop an apple on old Isaac’s head. He smiled at the memory, and thrust the pole into the riverbed, causing the punt to shoot forward again.

‘For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction,’ Romana recited.

‘That’s right!’

‘So Newton invented punting?’

‘Oh yes, there’s no limit to Isaac’s genius!’ The Doctor plunged the pole again and they shot under a bridge and out the other side.

‘Isn’t it wonderful how something so primitive can be so...’ Romana considered the right word.

‘Graceful?’ ventured the Doctor.

‘No, simple.’ She replied. ‘You just push in one direction, and the boat moves in the 9

other.’

‘Yes.’ The Doctor felt a little miffed that his companion had successfully reduced the graceful and delicate art of punting to a mere example of Newton’s Third Law. He concentrated instead on steering the punt, and began to hum in tune to the music playing on the ancient gramophone nestled in the bottom of the boat.

Romana trailed her hand in the water. ‘Oh I do love the spring. All the leaves, the colours...’ she eulogised, in an apparent attempt to restore the Doctor’s faith in her ability to appreciate the aesthetic beauty of things.

‘It’s October,’ the Doctor informed her.

Romana looked perplexed. ‘I thought you said we were coming here for May Week?’

‘I did. May Week’s in June!’

‘I’m confused,’ Romana confessed.

‘So was the TARDIS.’

Romana tried again. ‘Oh, I do love the autumn. All the leaves, the colours...’

‘Yes, well at least with something as simple as a punt, nothing can go wrong.’ He pushed down on the pole and heaved it up again. ‘No coordinates, no dimensional stabilisers - nothing. Just the water, a punt, a strong pair of hands…’ He thrust the pole into the river bed again, ‘… and a pole.’

At that moment, the Doctor discovered that the pole had become firmly lodged in the mud, and was forced to let go in order to avoid falling in. He swung his arms about in a desperate attempt to regain his balance.

‘The pole!’ exclaimed Romana, watching helplessly as they continued to drift. The pole remained stuck in the middle of the river behind them.

The Doctor successfully avoided toppling overboard, and dug around in the bottom of the punt as they passed under another bridge. He triumphantly extricated from under the gramophone an oar provided for just such emergencies.

The Doctor flashed Romana a toothy grin. ‘I think it’s about time we see if the Professor’s back in his room,’ he observed, and kneeling on the boat’s prow, he started to paddle.

A short distance down river from the Doctor and Romana’s punt, a man stood in the middle of a bridge, looking down at the water. He was somewhat flamboyantly dressed in a wide-brimmed white hat and a flowing silver cape over a white tunic and trousers. Held in a firm grasp at his side was a large, multi-coloured carpetbag. He watched impassively as the Doctor paddled the punt under the bridge.

‘... For every action there’s an opposite and equally difficult reaction...’ The Doctor was saying to Romana.

Romana looked up suddenly as the punt emerged from under the bridge. She craned her neck to see onto the bridge, but from her perspective it appeared to be deserted. She frowned. ‘Did you just hear voices?’ she asked.

The Doctor looked up his paddling. ‘What?’

As the punt moved further down river, the man moved to the other side of the bridge.

He tilted back his wide-brimmed hat to reveal eyes burning with a fierce intellect. He had a fine scar marking one side of his face.

It was the man from the Think Tank space station.

Chris Parsons had the use of a university physics laboratory on the other side of the Cambridge township. It had been allocated to him by his college for the purposes of his post graduate research into the nature and detection of Sigma particles. The laboratory was full of benches and equipment, including bunsen burners, a carbon dating machine, a spectro-graphic analyser and an X-ray machine. Much of the laboratory’s equipment had been ac-10

quired from various parts of the college, and showed the effects of much previous use.

Chris's research grant did not stretch to the purchase of new equipment.

Chris entered the lab and dropped his bag on to a bench before going to check on a couple of on-going experiments set up in a corner. Then he returned to the bag and pulled out the books he'd borrowed from the Professor. He quickly flipped through the first two and then noticed the third. Clicking his tongue in annoyance, he realised that he had also brought with him the first book he'd discovered on the Professor's shelves. He'd forgotten to put it back on the shelves and had mistakenly borrowed it with the two books on carbon dating.

He was about to put the book back in his bag when he was suddenly reminded how when he had first held it, the book seemed extraordinarily light. He was perplexed to find that it was now quite heavy. Furthermore, although the deep red coloured hardback cover appeared to be made of cloth and card, it had a hard, almost metallic feel about it. He looked for a title, but the only marks on the cover were some faded gold embossed letters on the spine in an alphabet he didn't recognise. He compared these to the writing on the pages of the book, and decided that they belonged to be of the same unknown hiero-glyphic alphabet. Chris ran his fingers across one of the pages. It felt like paper, yet at the same time incredibly tough like plastic, so he was surprised when smelling it a moment later, that it retained the unmistakable odour of old paper.

Chris pored over the mysterious book, his projects forgotten.

The Doctor strode up to the front entrance of St Cedd's College with long purposeful strides. 'Here we are,' he declared, pointing with the blade of the punt oar he was carrying.

'St Cedd's College, Cambridge. Founded in the year something or other, by someone whose name I forget in honour of someone for the moment escapes me completely.'

'St Cedd?' ventured Romana, as they passed through an archway.

The Doctor stopped in his tracks and beamed at her. 'Do you know, I think you're very probably right? You should have been a historian.'

Romana sighed. 'I am a historian,' she told him, but the Doctor had already moved off again. 'I should be a nursemaid,' she muttered to under her breath and hurried after him.

She caught up to the Doctor as he approached a porter's office, where a little man in a dark suit, bowler hat and heavy rimmed spectacles, was pinning notices to a board outside his office.

'Good afternoon, Wilkin,' said the Doctor, coming up beside him.

‘Good afternoon, Doctor,’ replied the Porter without hesitation.

The Doctor smiled widely. ‘Wilkin! You remembered me!’

‘Why, yes of course, sir,’ said Wilkin politely, as if there were no reason for any doubt in the matter. ‘Took an honorary degree in 1960.’

‘Yes, but how kind of you to remember me.’

‘That’s my job, sir.’

‘And you do it splendidly,’ said the Doctor graciously. ‘Now...’

‘Professor Chronotis, sir?’ Wilkin prompted, anticipating the Doctor’s request. ‘He returned to his room a few minutes ago.’

‘Oh good, good,’ replied the Doctor, and then hesitated. ‘How did you know I wanted to see Professor Chronotis?’

‘That’s who you asked to see when you were here in 1964, 1960, and 1955, sir,’ Wilkin explained.

‘Did I really?’ asked the Doctor. ‘I was also here in 1958,’ he added.

The Porter looked baffled. ‘Were you sir?’ he inquired doubtfully.

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‘Yes, but in a different body,’ the Doctor informed him.

‘Just as you say, sir.’

‘Come along, Doctor,’ said Romana firmly.

‘Nice to meet you again, Wilkin,’ the Doctor told the Porter, passing him the punt oar.

‘Bye, bye.’

Wilkin watched for a moment as the Doctor and Romana walked off, and then carried the oar into his office.

“... The Time Traveller vanished three years ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.”

Professor Chronotis finished his book and stared into the bottom of his empty teacup.

Deciding it was time for some more tea, he picked up the tray and carried it into the kitchen. Just as he was leaving the room, there was a knock at the door.

‘Come in!’ he called from the kitchen. The Doctor entered the study, followed by Romana.

‘He’ll ask us if we want tea,’ the Doctor confided to Romana quietly.

As if on cue, the call came from the kitchen. ‘Tea?’

The Doctor grinned, and made himself comfortable in an armchair. ‘Yes please - two cups!’

‘Milk?’ asked the voice from the kitchen.

‘Yes please,’ said the Doctor as Romana took a seat, smiling with him.

‘One lump or two?’

‘Two please, and two sugars,’ said the Doctor and Romana in unison.

Chronotis burst into the room, carrying the tea tray. ‘Ah! Doctor, how splendid to see you!’ he exclaimed delightedly.

‘You too, Professor,’ the Doctor beamed, rising to shake hands with his old friend.

‘This is Romana,’ he continued.

‘Oh delighted, delighted,’ the Professor told her. ‘I’ve heard so much about you.’

Romana’s face betrayed her surprise. ‘Have you really?’

‘Well, not yet,’ added the Professor, as they all sat down again, ‘but I’m sure I will have done. When Time Lords get to my age, they tend to get their tenses muddled up. Now would you have liked some biscuits too?’

‘Well, I wouldn’t have said no,’ replied the Doctor.

‘Crackers?’

‘Oh, sometimes…’

The man from Think Tank strode along a busy Cambridge street with a purposeful air about him. Despite his strange outfit, none of the Cambridge residents paid him any attention. Clutching his carpetbag, he made his way towards St Cedd’s College.

2

The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey

‘Three hundred years?’ Romana asked.

Chronotis looked up from serving tea and crackers to his guests. ‘Yes, my dear.’

‘And in the same set of rooms?’

‘Ever since I retired from Gallifrey,’ the Professor confirmed.

‘Didn’t anybody notice?’

‘One of the delights of the older Cambridge Colleges,’ Chronotis told her. ‘Everyone is so discreet.’ He turned to the Doctor. ‘Now, Doctor, young fellow, what can I do for you?’

The Doctor frowned. ‘What can you do for me? You mean, “What can I do for you?”

You sent for me.’

Chronotis looked perplexed. ‘Sent for you?’

‘Yes. We got your signal,’ the Doctor explained.

‘Signal? What signal?’

The Doctor bit into a cracker. ‘Romana, didn’t we pick up a signal from the Professor?

Would we come and see him as soon as possible?’ he asked through a mouthful of crumbs.

‘Yes,’ Romana nodded. ‘We came straight away.’

Chronotis shook his head. ‘I never sent you a signal… but it’s splendid to see you anyway. Why don’t you just relax and enjoy yourselves?’ he suggested.

The Doctor was deep in thought, pondering the mysterious origin of the signal.

‘Have another cracker,’ said the Professor, offering him the plate.

‘I will, Professor,’ replied the Doctor. ‘If you didn’t send the signal, who did?’

A shadow fell across Wilkin's notice board, and the diminutive porter turned to see a tall imposing figure standing beside him in a silver cape and a wide-brimmed hat. He was looking into the college grounds, apparently searching for some-thing.

'You,' said the stranger without looking at Wilkin.

Wilkin took an instant dislike to the arrogance of the man, and ignored him, turning back to his notices.

'You!' demanded the stranger, more threateningly this time.

'Were you addressing me?' asked Wilkin with evident distaste.

'I want Chronotis.'

'Professor Chronotis,' Wilkin corrected him disapprovingly.

'Where is he?'

'He will not want to be disturbed. He is with the Doctor. A very old...'

The stranger glared at him, but Wilkin was undaunted.

'... A very old friend,' he told the man meaningfully.

The stranger continued to stare into the distance. Then without another word, he abruptly turned and walked off, away from the College.

Wilkin scowled at his retreating back.

13

Chris Parsons finished setting up his microscope, and then turned to the book, lying open on the bench. He picked up a razor blade and carefully sliced a sliver of paper from the edge of the page to examine under the microscope. Or rather, he attempted to do so, as the blade made no more impression on the paper than it would on the surface of a diamond.

Putting the blade aside, Chris picked up the book and carried it over to his spectro-graphic analyser. It was clear that the pages were made of no ordinary substance, and in order to learn anything about the substance's molecular structure, he would have to study its radiation emissions. The spectro-graph could interpret these emissions as separate wavelengths forming a spectrum, and the results would indicate the atomic make-up of the pages.

Chris placed the book into the spectrograph with the spine folded back so that only one page was actually being examined. When he was satisfied that everything was set up correctly, he switched on the analyser. After a few minutes of humming, the spectrograph suddenly gave off a loud bang, and began to belch smoke. Chris immediately ripped the plug out of the wall, and began to fan away the smoke. To his relief, the book was undamaged.

'Wait!' exclaimed Professor Chronotis suddenly.

The Doctor stopped in the middle of biting into a cracker, and Romana paused in the process of lifting her tea cup to her mouth. 'What for?' inquired Romana.

'I've just had an idea about who might have sent that message,' the Professor explained.

'Who?' Romana wanted to know.

'Me!'

The Doctor was confused. 'I thought you said you didn't?'

'Yes, I know,' admitted the Professor apologetically. 'Memory's getting a bit touchy of late. Doesn't like to be prodded about too much.' He tapped the side of his head meaningfully. 'But my dear old things,' he added, 'it must be ages since I sent it.'

'I said you'd got the time wrong, Doctor,' said Romana accusingly.

'I know, but you're always saying that,' the Doctor retorted.

'You're always getting the time wrong!'

During this exchange the Professor returned to the kitchen. Noticing his absence, the Doctor called, 'Professor?'

'Yes?' came the reply from the kitchen.

'What was it about?'

'What was what about?'

'The message,' the Doctor reminded him patiently.

The Professor came back into the study. 'I don't know. You've seen it more recently than I have.'

'Was it to do with the voices?' prompted the Doctor gently.

'What voices?'

‘Well, when we were on the river, I heard this strange sound, a sort of strange babble of inhuman voices. Didn’t you, Romana?’

‘Yes,’ his companion confirmed.

‘Oh, just undergraduates talking to each other I expect,’ said the Professor vaguely.

‘I’ve tried to have it banned, but no.’

‘No,’ disagreed the Doctor. ‘It wasn’t anything like that at all. It was a sound like a lot of people... or ghosts. Very quietly...’

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‘Screaming,’ concluded Romana.

‘Yes,’ the Doctor agreed.

The Professor shrugged. ‘Overwrought imaginings, Doctor,’ he said dismissively. ‘No, I remember what it was...’ He fell silent, seemingly preoccupied with an unpleasant memory.

The Doctor leaned forward. ‘What?’

‘A delicate matter, slightly. It was about a book...’

The Doctor’s expression fell as he looked around at the hundreds of books lining the room. ‘A book?’

‘Yes.’

‘Ah,’ said the Doctor, and took another sip of tea.

Wearing a protective apron, Chris watched from behind the shield window of his old X-ray machine as he took a plate of the book. His eyes widened with astonishment as the book started to glow, and not wanting to repeat the experience with the spectrograph, he hastily switched the machine off, and carefully approached the book. Tentatively, he reached out a hand to touch it, and then snatched it away again. The book was definitely hot, almost as if it had been drawing off radiation from the machine...

With a flourish of his silver cape, the stranger emerged from an alleyway into a busy main street. He stood by a shop window and observed the bustling life around him.

A middle-aged man in a brown jacket and tie emerged from the shop clutching his keys. He went over to his car, parked at the roadside, and unlocked the door.

‘I say?’ ventured the stranger, coming up beside the man.

The man in the brown jacket turned to face him. ‘Can I help you?’

‘Yes, perhaps you can.’ The stranger proceeded to convince the man that he urgently required a lift out of town and would be very grateful if he could give him a ride.

The man readily agreed, and opened the passenger door for the stranger, who got in and placed the carpetbag on his lap. The man climbed in behind the wheel, started the car, and drove a short way down the street.

The car came to a sudden halt with a squeal of brakes. Inside, the carpetbag was open and empty on the stranger’s lap. The bag’s previous occupant, the large silver sphere that the stranger had taken from Think Tank, was attached to the driver’s forehead. His body lay slumped back in the seat, his mouth open in a silent scream.

The sphere detached itself, and the stranger hauled the driver out of his seat and dumped him in the back of the car. He took the man’s place at the wheel. The sphere settled on the seat beside him, a babble of inhuman voices coming from it. The stranger stared at the unfamiliar controls, concentrating his mind on the sounds from the sphere.

Moments later, he put the car in gear and smoothly accelerated away with the confidence and skill of an experienced driver.

As the car drove past St Cedd’s College on the road out of town, the sphere continued to babble.

‘Did you just hear voices?’ asked the Professor. He was standing on a stool, taking down books from the top shelf and handing them to Romana.

‘Professor, I think that...’ the Doctor paused. ‘I just heard voices,’ he said in a hushed tone. ‘Romana, did you just hear voices?’

‘Yes. Very faint this time. From...’ Romana paused, trying to place their origin.

‘Yes?’ persisted the Doctor.

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‘Inside my head?’ suggested Romana.

‘That’s what I thought,’ added the Professor helpfully.

‘Is it anything to do with that book, Professor?’ asked the Doctor.

‘What? Oh, no, no, no,’ Chronotis shook his head adamantly. ‘That’s just a book that I... well, accidentally brought from Gallifrey with me, and I thought it was about time it, er...’

‘From Gallifrey?’ exclaimed Romana. ‘You brought a book from Gallifrey to Cambridge?’

‘Well, just a few knickknacks. You know how I love my books, Doctor,’ the Professor said cagily.

‘Professor,’ the Doctor reminded him, ‘you just said you brought it by accident.’

Chronotis shrugged. ‘An oversight. I overlooked the fact that I had decided to bring it.’

The Doctor frowned, but said nothing.

‘It was just for study, you know,’ continued the Professor. ‘But as I’m now getting very old, I thought…’

‘You thought that perhaps I’d take it straight back to Gallifrey for you?’ suggested the Doctor.

‘Well now that I’m retired, I’m not allowed to have a TARDIS,’ replied the Professor evasively.

The Doctor drew a deep breath. ‘Professor, I don’t want to be critical, but I will. It’s terribly risky to take books from Gallifrey. I mean, they could be so dangerous in the wrong hands.’ He looked at the Professor, expecting a reply.

Chronotis meekly nodded.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor.

Chris dialled a number on the telephone in his laboratory. He had initially considered calling the Head of Physics, but then decided to get a friend’s second opinion before he went bothering Doctor Elizabeth Shaw with his discovery. He waited a few moments for the phone to be answered.

‘Keightley? Hey, yes it’s Chris. Listen, I’ve just... What? Yes, I’m fine… Listen, the most amazing thing. I’ve got this strange book. It’s got a molecular structure unlike anything I’ve seen… Yes, I said book. It’s like nothing on Earth. And I think I mean that literally… Extra-terrestrial… No, I’m not mad. Listen, I’ve done everything: x-rays, spectrograph, you name it. You don’t have to believe anything till you’ve seen it yourself… Yeah, come on over… Great. See you soon.’

Chris put down the phone, and sat watching the book intently, as if expecting it to vanish at any moment.

‘“On some nights New York is as hot as Bangkok...” I’ve read that,’ the Doctor observed.

He passed the book the Professor had handed him on to Romana.

Romana glanced at the author’s name on the spine. ‘Saul Bellow,’ she read, and added the novel, The Victim, to a steadily growing pile of books on a table.

The Doctor was passed another book. He opened it and began to read the first line as he had done with the previous one. ‘“Once upon a time...” - read that!’ he exclaimed.

The Professor handed him a third book, and once again the Doctor read from it. ‘Aha!’

he exclaimed. ‘“... And in the ancient days of Rassilon, five great principles were laid down. Can you remember what they were, children?”’

‘It’s just a Gallifreyan nursery book,’ observed Romana, taking it from him. ‘Our Planet’s Story - I had that when I was a Time Tot.’

16

‘Yes, it’s really good,’ said the Doctor sincerely.

Romana gave him a disbelieving look.

‘That’s just a memento,’ said the Professor distractedly. ‘Not the right book at all.

Where is it?’ he asked himself, a note of worry creeping into his voice. He pulled another book from the shelves. ‘Is this the one? No, not that one… Where is it? I know it’s here somewhere.’

‘Professor, Professor,’ said the Doctor suddenly. ‘How many books did you bring, for heaven’s sake?’

‘Oh just the odd two or seven...’ admitted the old man. ‘But there’s only one that was in any way...’

‘Dangerous?’ suggested the Doctor.

‘Yes.’

A short distance out of the town of Cambridge, the stranger drove the car off the road and up a short gravel track that ended in a gate leading on to a large field. He parked the car out of sight under a cluster of willow trees and then walked out across the field.

Suddenly he began climbing into the air, as if walking up an invisible slope. As he did so, his body began to disappear from view as well, beginning with the top of his head and ending with his feet.

Within seconds, there was no trace of him ever having been there.

The Professor was now on the floor, feverishly sorting through a mountain of volumes scattered about him. The Doctor and Romana were assisting by neatly stacking the books as he discarded them.

'What does it look like?' asked Romana at last. 'What's it called?'

The Professor looked up briefly. 'The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey.'

The Doctor's mouth dropped open. 'The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey?' he repeated.

'Er, yes,' replied the Professor, unperturbed. 'A red book, about five by seven.'

'Professor, how did that book get out of the Panopticon Archives?' the Doctor asked gravely.

Chronotis looked distinctly uncomfortable. 'Well, what I did, you see, was I... I just took it.'

'Took it!' exclaimed the Doctor.

'Well, there's no one interested in ancient history on Gallifrey any longer. And I thought that, possibly, certain things would be safer with me...'

'And were they?' inquired the Doctor meaningfully.

'Yes, in principle,' replied Professor Chronotis.

'Good. "Delicate matter", Professor? "Slightly",' the Doctor quoted him. He helped the Professor to his feet, put an arm around the old man's shoulders and leaned in close to his ear. 'Professor, that book dates back to the days of Rassilon.'

'Does it?' said the Professor ingenuously. 'Oh, er, yes, it would do. Yes,' he agreed reluctantly.

'It's one of the Artifacts,' continued the Doctor.

'Is it indeed?'

The Doctor was losing patience with Chronotis. 'Oh, come on, Professor, you know that perfectly well. And you also know perfectly well that Rassilon had powers and secrets that even we don't fully understand. You have no idea what might have been hidden in that book!'

‘Well, there’s not much chance of anyone else understanding it then, is there?’ suggested the Professor brightly.

‘I only hope you’re right. I think we’d better find it.’ The Doctor left the Professor to continue his search, and went over to Romana, who had climbed up on the stool and was replacing books on the shelves. ‘Romana!’ the Doctor called up to her. ‘Little red book...’

‘Five by seven,’ she answered.

‘Good, good,’ said the Doctor approvingly.

‘Could be green...’ the Professor added suddenly.

The stranger entered the gleaming white interior of the spacecraft he had piloted to Earth from the Think Tank station. The exterior hull was at present shielded, so that it appeared invisible from the outside.

The stranger walked along a passageway until he reached the ship’s bridge. The chamber was empty apart from a small amount of instrumentation and a couple of couches. The ship was quiet and deserted.

‘Feed me!’ he demanded suddenly.

By his side, a beautifully prepared serving trolley laden with equally delightful food materialised from nowhere. The man sat down in one of the couches.

‘Rest me.’

His head was bathed in a gentle aura for a few moments, then the aura disappeared and the man opened his eyes, refreshed and revitalised. He took some food from the trolley and began to eat.

‘I have confirmed the location of the book,’ he said. ‘It shall soon be mine.’

‘Congratulations, my Lord,’ a soft feminine voice replied. The voice was that of the ship itself.

‘Tell me of the one called “The Doctor”,’ the man ordered.

A holographic projection sprang up in front of him, displaying a rapid series of images and information about the Doctor.

As the projection played, the man’s eyes blinked very fast, assimilating all of the data.

When the recording stopped, he paused for a moment, deep in thought. ‘He has no more power than the others,’ the man said eventually. ‘Only one has the power I seek, and when I have the book that power shall be mine. Get me the Carrier Ship.’

The projection flickered and resolved into a new image.

‘All goes well,’ said the man, addressing the projection. ‘I shall be with you very soon, and then let the Universe prepare itself for me!’

The projection displayed a creature straight from a nightmare. It was roughly humanoid, with glowing, fiery red triangular scales. Its face seemed to be composed of lumps of coal with burning eyes. ‘Everything is ready,’ the creature hissed.

18

3

In Search of the Book

‘Roget’s Thesaurus,’ read Romana.

‘British Book of Wild Birds in Colour,’ added the Doctor.

The search in Professor Chronotis’ study was continuing. The Doctor and Romana were sitting on the floor amidst a clutter of books. The Professor had retired to the kitchen to fortify them with tea.

‘Alternative Betelgeuse,’ said Romana, raising her eyebrows at the odd selection of titles in the Professor’s collection.

The Doctor picked up the Professor’s most recent acquisition. ‘The Time Machine.’

‘Sweeney Todd.’

‘Tandoori Chicken for Starters.’

‘Chariots of the Gods.’ Romana flung this title away in disgust.

‘And there’s no sign of The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey,’ added the Doctor ruefully.

‘Do you really think it is important?’

The Doctor looked surprised at Romana's question. 'Of course it is. It's one of the Artifacts of Rassilon!'

'But other than its historical value,' Romana persisted.

'Yes. Each of the Artifacts was imbued with stupendous power. The meanings of most of them have been lost now, but the powers remain - and the rituals.'

Romana shrugged. 'I just mouthed the words like everyone else.'

The Doctor was interested. 'What words?'

'At the Time Academy Induction Ceremony,' explained Romana. 'You know – "I swear to protect the Ancient Law of Gallifrey with all my might and main and to the end of my days I will with justice and with honour temper my actions and my thoughts…"'

'Pompous lot,' declared the Doctor, getting to his feet. 'All words and no actions.

'Well that's not fair,' argued Romana. 'My history books always made the old days sound very exciting. What about Salyavin?'

'Salyavin?' repeated the Doctor. He frowned, and then a broad smile crossed his features as he remembered. 'Oh yes, Salyavin! He was a boyhood hero of mine.'

'Really Doctor? A great criminal your hero?'

'Well, criminal, yes,' admitted the Doctor, 'but such style, such flair, such…'

'Panache?' suggested Romana.

'Yes! A bit like me in that respect.'

Romana laughed. 'Did you ever meet him?'

'I certainly did not,' replied the Doctor indignantly. 'He was imprisoned before I was born.'

'Where?'

'Do you know, I've no idea,' he admitted, and then had a thought. 'Professor!' he 19

called.

'Yes?' came the reply from the kitchen.

'Salyavin was a contemporary of yours, wasn't he? Do you know where he was imprisoned?'

The Professor suddenly burst into the room in a state of great agitation. ‘I’ve just remembered!’ he declared.

The Doctor was impressed. ‘I’ve only just asked you.’

‘What?’

‘Where Salyavin was imprisoned.’

‘Salyavin?’ said the Professor blankly, ‘I’m not talking about Salyavin. Good riddance to him. We must find the book!’

‘Professor, what do you think we’re doing?’ the Doctor reminded him patiently.

‘But I’ve just remembered!’

‘What?’

‘There was a young man here, earlier. Came to borrow some books. He took them whilst I was out of the room making tea. He might have taken it.’

‘What was his name?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Oh, I can’t remember that. Oh dear, I’ve got a memory like... Oh dear, what is it I’ve got a memory like? What’s that thing you drain rice in?’ The Professor shook his head as if expecting the action to clear his thoughts.

‘Professor, what was his name?’ urged the Doctor.

‘Was he old, young, tall, short?’ prompted Romana.

‘Ah, I remember!’ the Professor declared.

‘What?’

‘Sieve! That’s what it is. I’ve got a memory like a sieve!’

The Doctor struggled to control his rising impatience. ‘Professor! Who took the book?’

‘Ah, I can’t remember his name.’

‘Professor, please do try,’ Romana insisted.

‘All right,’ he agreed. ‘“A”? No, it didn’t begin with “A”. “B”? No...’

‘“C”?’ suggested the Doctor and Romana in unison.

‘“D?”’ added the Professor.

Chris Parsons' friend Clare Keightley was an attractive young woman, with long dark hair done up in a severe bun which made her look more like a businesswoman than a post-graduate student.

She held the mystery book open in her hands. 'Feels like paper,' she observed. 'Smells like paper, doesn't behave like paper. Plastic?'

Chris shook his head. 'Not a single polymer in sight.'

'Metal?' she suggested.

'No crystalline structure whatsoever.'

'Crystal?'

Chris shrugged. 'If it is, our Mr. Dalton's got a lot of explaining to do,' he remarked, referring to the atomic theorist John Dalton. 'That's what I mean. Yes, I think it is a crystal, no it can't be a crystal. Half of it is stable all the time, half of it none of the time. It behaves like a super-conductor one minute, and blows up my equipment the next.'

'What's it about?' asked Clare.

'What?'

'The book,' she smiled. 'What's it about?'

Chris shrugged again. 'Well I don't know, do I? Reads like a cross between Chinese 20

and algebra.'

'Why don't you ask old what's-his-name,' she suggested.

'Well that's the brooms thing to do, I suppose,' replied Chris.

'Is that why you haven't done it yet?' she suggested teasingly.

Chris grinned, and reached for his coat. Clare went over to the sink and started to fill the kettle for a cup of tea.

'Make yourself at home,' Chris invited.

'Thanks,' replied Clare cheerfully, and Chris left with a wave.

Neither of them could have known that it would be many eventful hours before they would be reunited, and even then under very different circumstances.

The Professor was still running through the alphabet in an attempt to jog his memory.

‘“N”... “O”…’ He paused after each letter, and then shook his head before going on to the next. ‘“P”... Parsons, Christopher!’ he declared suddenly. ‘Born 1956, graduated 1978.

Honours Degree in Chemistry, currently engaged on Post Graduate studies in Sigma Particles…’

‘Where would he be now, Professor?’ asked the Doctor, greatly relieved.

‘Physics lab, I should think. Turn left at…’

The Doctor held up a silencing hand. He had visited Cambridge University on many occasions, especially during his exile on Earth some years earlier. ‘Yes, I know. And be careful crossing the street, certainly. I’ll be back in two minutes or so.’

The Professor nodded, and wandered off back into the kitchen.

The Doctor went to the front door, silently motioning Romana to join him. ‘If I’m not back in an hour, both of you get in the TARDIS and lock the doors,’ he instructed quietly.

‘Put out an All Frequencies Alert and wait for the cavalry.’

‘Cavalry?’ Romana inquired.

The Doctor shook his head. ‘Never mind.’

The Professor came back into the room just in time to see the Doctor depart. Romana sighed, and sat down on the Professor’s sofa.

‘More tea, my dear?’ he suggested.

‘Lovely,’ replied Romana. ‘Two lumps, no sugar.’

Chronotis nodded, and started back into the kitchen. He paused, and turned back to Romana. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said kindly. ‘He’ll be all right.’

The stranger returned to the bridge of his spacecraft. He had changed his outfit, and was straightening his tie as he entered the chamber. The clothes had once belonged to the man who had given him a ride.

He finished with his tie, and picked up the brown jacket, which hung over the back of one of the couches. The carpetbag containing the sphere was also on the seat.

Once he had donned the jacket, he spoke. ‘My appearance?’ he asked.

‘Perfectly correct in every detail, my lord,’ replied the Ship.

The man picked up the carpetbag. ‘I am going to retrieve the book. I shall return immediately.’

‘Very well, my lord.’

‘Have you disposed of the carrion?’ he inquired, referring to the unfortunate former owner of his outfit.

‘As you directed, my lord.’

He nodded, and turned to leave. The door opened ahead of him and he strode down the passageway and activated the exit hatch.

21

Outside, in the field, he gradually appeared in mid-air, feet first, as he descended the invisible ramp way. Once he reached the ground, he walked over to the car, carrying the carpetbag.

With some persuasion, the Doctor had got Wilkin to agree to lend him a bicycle. Wobbling from lack of practice, the Doctor rode off down a busy street. Narrowly avoiding a nasty collision, he stuck his arm out to indicate a turn and swerved into another road, almost colliding with another cyclist coming towards him. The Doctor dodged swiftly, and gave the man a cheery wave of apology before continuing on his way with considerable haste.

Chris Parsons screeched to a halt and looked back over his shoulder at the strangely attired man who had almost crashed into him. Shaking his head, he dismissed the incident, and rode on.

Wilkin had just returned to his office from arranging a bicycle for the Doctor when the stranger who had been so rude to him before approached him once more.

‘Is the Professor alone now?’ demanded the arrogant man.

‘The Doctor left a short time ago, sir,’ said the porter punctiliously. Without another word, the stranger strode off towards the Professor’s rooms.

Romana busied herself waiting for the Doctor’s return by clearing the floor of the study of the mountain of books. Now that the room was back in some semblance of order, she sat toasting crumpets on a long toasting fork over an electric heater. She looked up as the Professor came back into the room.

‘Oh dear,’ he began apologetically.

‘What’s the matter?’ inquired Romana, expecting the worst.

‘I’ve run out of milk.’

Romana smiled. ‘Oh, I should think that’s the least of our problems,’ she observed.

Professor Chronotis nodded. ‘I do feel so stupid about losing that book,’ he confessed.

‘Don’t worry,’ Romana assured him. ‘We’ll find it.’

‘Oh, I do hope so, I hope so.’

Romana shuddered, despite being close to the heater.

‘You’re shivering,’ observed the Professor. ‘Are you cold?’

Romana shook her head. ‘No, it’s just a feeling. The sound of those voices unnerved me.’

The Professor nodded understandingly. ‘A hot cup of tea will make you feel better.’

Romana nodded in agreement.

‘Ah, no milk, of course,’ recalled the Professor. ‘I’ll just pop out and get some.’

‘I don’t think that’s a very good idea, Professor.’

The Professor hesitated on his way to the door. ‘Why not? It’s the only way I know of getting milk. Short of keeping a cow,’ he added.

Romana thought quickly. She knew that the Doctor thought that there might be danger in going out while he was away fetching the book. ‘We’ve got plenty,’ she said suddenly, pointing to the police box in the corner.

The Professor smiled. ‘Oh yes, of course! Splendid.’ He watched as Romana got up and fished out her key. ‘Type Forty, isn’t it?’ he inquired, following her over to the TARDIS. ‘First came out when I was a boy. That shows you how old I am.’

Romana unlocked the police box door. ‘I won’t be a moment,’ she promised, and disappeared inside.

‘Oh yes you will,’ the Professor called in after her. ‘One of the main complaints about

the Type Forty was that its kitchens were an intolerable distance from the control chamber.’

Romana popped her head back out of the doors. ‘I’ve never known the Doctor to use them, anyway,’ she added, and disappeared once more.

Chronotis patted the side of the police box, and then moved away, reminiscing to himself. ‘Salyavin? Yes... Good riddance to him.’ He moved back towards the kitchen. ‘Good riddance. Pah!’

A number of chattering voices could be heard, outside his door. ‘Undergraduates,’ he muttered.

There was a knock at the door, and the voices grew correspondingly louder. ‘Come in!’

called the Professor, going into the kitchen.

The stranger entered the room, carrying the carpetbag, from which the babble of voices could be heard.

‘Have to be lemon tea, I’m afraid,’ called the Professor from the kitchen. ‘No milk at the moment. Girl’s gone to get some.’

The stranger unclipped the carpetbag, and the voices grew louder still.

Hearing the voices, the Professor called out, ‘How many are there of you, for heaven’s sake? I haven’t got many cups.’

When there was no reply, the Professor came back in to see for himself. He paused when he saw the strange man standing in his living room.

‘Professor Chronotis?’ he asked.

‘Where are the others?’ inquired the Professor, looking around.

‘Professor Chronotis?’ repeated the stranger.

‘Who are you?’

‘I have come for the book.’

‘Book? What book?’

The man was not taken in by the Professor’s deception. ‘You know what book. The book.’

‘I don’t know what you’re talking about,’ insisted the Professor adamantly. ‘I don’t have any book. That is, I have lots of books. What book do you want?’

‘The book you took from the Panopticon Archives.’

The Professor was caught off-guard by the stranger’s knowledge of Gallifrey. ‘What do you know of the Panopticon?’

‘The book, Professor!’ insisted the man. ‘You are to give it to me.’

‘On whose instructions?’ Chronotis challenged him.

‘Mine, Professor.’

‘Who are you?’ the Professor asked again.

‘My name does not concern you. Give me the book.’

The Professor shook his head. ‘I don’t know where it is.’

‘If you will not give me the information voluntarily, I will deduct it from you,’ said the stranger threateningly. ‘I am sure there is much else in your mind that will interest me.’ He held his carpetbag open, and the sphere rose out of it.

The Professor watched in horror as the sphere hovered towards him. ‘What are you doing? No!’ he protested, but the sphere attached itself to his forehead, and the Professor sank to the floor.

‘Do not fight it, Professor,’ advised the stranger with a smile. ‘Do not fight it, or you will die!’

23

4

The Sphere

Clare Keightley was cleaning the smoke damage from the spectrograph in the laboratory when the Doctor knocked on the door and entered.

‘Hello,’ he said. ‘I’m looking for Chris Parsons.’

Clare smiled apologetically. ‘You’ve just missed him, I’m afraid.’

The Doctor suddenly spied the book, lying on a bench. ‘A-ha!’ he exclaimed triumphantly.

‘Can I give him a message?’ Clare suggested helpfully.

The Doctor gingerly picked up the book. ‘This isn’t yours?’ he asked.

‘No,’ replied Clare. ‘Is it yours?’

‘No. It belongs to some friends of mine.’

‘Strange book,’ Clare observed.

‘Strange friends,’ replied the Doctor, ‘and careless; strangely careless... Why did you take it?

‘I didn’t,’ replied Clare defensively.

‘I know.’

‘Look, what is all this about?’

The Doctor looked up from examining the book. ‘What’s what about?’

‘This book.’

‘Have you read it?’

‘Hardly,’ said Clare. ‘The writing looks more like an explosion in a spaghetti tree.’

The Doctor was taken aback at this simile. ‘Like what?’

‘Where did it come from? What’s it made of? Why did it make the spectrograph blow up?’

His eyes widened in surprise. ‘It did that?’

Clare nodded. ‘Yes.’

The Doctor stared at the book and then at Clare. Suddenly he broke into a large, toothy grin. ‘Hello, I’m the Doctor,’ he said, extending his hand. ‘You’re...?’

‘Clare,’ she replied, accepting his handshake, ‘Clare Keightley.’

‘Can I have a look at your spectrograph?’ the Doctor asked.

Professor Chronotis had been right about the kitchen being a long way from the console room. It had taken Romana a long time to get to the kitchen and back. She entered the TARDIS console room, carrying a full bottle of milk, and went to the console. She was about to open the doors, when she hesitated, and changed her mind.

‘K9?’ she called.

The Doctor’s robot dog glided around the console towards her. ‘Mistress?’

‘Do you want to come out and be useful? This doesn’t seem to be just a social visit after all.’

‘Affirmative, Mistress,’ replied K9. ‘My function is to assist you.’

‘Well you can tell me how old this milk is for a start.’ She bent down and held out the bottle.

K9 extended his probe and scanned the bottle. ‘It has been in the stasis preserver for only thirty years. It is perfectly fresh.’

Romana nodded, and straightened up. ‘Good.’ She operated the door control. ‘Come on, I’ll introduce you to the Professor.’

The room was in a much worse state than before; many of the Professor’s books had been scattered around the floor. The motionless form of the Professor lay where he had fallen.

Romana did not immediately register this scene as she left the TARDIS. ‘I’ve got the milk!’ she called holding the door open for her robot dog to follow her out of the police box. ‘Come on, K9.’ She shut the door behind him, and turned to take in the scene before her.

‘Professor!’ Romana immediately noticed his death-like state. She hurried over and bent down to examine him, depositing the now-forgotten bottle of milk on the tea table.

At that moment, there was a knock at the door, and she looked up in alarm. ‘Who is it?’ she demanded anxiously, fearing the worst.

The door opened, and Chris Parsons entered. ‘Ah, it’s me, Professor,’ he called as he came through the door. ‘I just came back to...’ He halted as he saw Romana bent over the Professor’s prone form. ‘What’s happened?’ he gasped when his voice returned. ‘Is he all right?’

‘I don’t know,’ Romana replied tersely. ‘I think he’s dead.’

K9 completed a scan of the Professor’s body. ‘Negative Mistress,’ he reported. ‘He is alive but he is in a deep coma.

‘Well what’s happened to him?’ demanded Chris, failing to take in for the moment the absurd notion of a talking robot dog.

‘Processing data,’ reported K9.

‘Do you know him?’ Romana asked Chris.

Chris shrugged apologetically. ‘Hardly at all. He just lent me a book.’

‘A book!’ exclaimed Romana. ‘We’ve been looking for a book! Are you whatsisname, Christopher Parsons?’

‘Chris Parsons, well, yes,’ he confirmed.

‘Have you got it?’ she inquired. ‘The book?’

Chris shook his head. ‘No. I left it back at the lab. You see, I couldn’t understand…’

Something else occurred to Romana. ‘Isn’t the Doctor with you?’

‘Well how would I know?’ replied Chris indignantly. ‘I didn’t know the Professor was ill!’

‘No,’ explained Romana patiently, ‘The Doctor.’

Chris looked puzzled. ‘What?’

‘Mistress,’ K9 chipped in. ‘The Professor has been subjected to psychoactive extraction.’

‘Will he be all right?’

‘Physical prognosis fair. Psycho prognosis uncertain.’

Chris finally focused on K9. ‘It’s a robot,’ he stated in sudden wonderment.

‘Of course,’ replied Romana, her attention on the Professor.

‘A robot dog.’

‘Yes,’ Romana smiled slightly at his astonishment.

‘Neat.’

25

Romana’s smile vanished, slightly put out by the fact that Chris had accepted K9 so readily. She turned her attention back to the matter of the Professor. ‘K9, you said psychoactive extraction?’

‘Affirmative Mistress,’ confirmed K9. ‘Someone has stolen part of his mind.’

Chris frowned. ‘What did your dog say?’

‘Someone has stolen part of his mind,’ K9 repeated. ‘His attempts to resist have caused severe cerebral trauma. He is weakening fast.’

Reality began to assert itself on Chris' mind. 'Is all this for real?' he asked weakly.

Romana ignored the question. 'Do you want to make yourself useful?' she inquired, fixing him with a critical look.

'Well, if I can,' he said dubiously, already feeling out of his depth.

'Go and get the medical kit from the TARDIS,' she instructed.

Chris' mouth sagged open. 'From the what...?'

Romana pointed at the TARDIS. 'Over there. Go in, first door on the left, down the corridor, second door on the right, down the corridor, third door on the left, down the corridor, fourth door on the right...' She hesitated, mentally checking her directions.

'Down the corridor?' prompted Chris hopefully.

'No,' she replied decisively. 'White cupboard opposite the door, metal case, top shelf.'

Chris boggled. 'For a minute I thought you were pointing at the police box,' he admitted.

'I was.'

'But...'

'Please get it,' Romana urged.

Shaking his head, Chris went over to the TARDIS, pushed open the door and stepped in. Moments later, he stepped out again. His mouth worked up and down but no words came out as his brain struggled to cope with what he'd just witnessed.

'Hurry up!' Romana insisted, and Chris re-entered the box, somewhat numbly. Romana turned her attention back to the Professor. 'Professor? Can you hear me? Professor?'

'Mistress,' reported K9. 'His mind has gone.'

'But you just said part of it, K9.'

'Affirmative. The part that is left is totally inert.'

'Professor!' repeated Romana desperately.

'No response, Mistress,' reported K9.

At this point, Chris re-emerged from the TARDIS, panting from having run the whole way there and back. 'How do you... have you got a patent for that thing?' he gasped.

'Have you got the kit?' inquired Romana.

Chris produced a white metal case. ‘Here.’ He brought it over and placed it on the floor beside the Professor.

‘Thank you,’ said Romana gratefully. She opened the case and took out a half-circle -

shaped band of metal, centered with a raised disc. She placed it over the Professor’s neck like a collar.

‘What are you doing to him?’ Chris asked.

Romana activated the device. Flashing lights appeared on the disc and along the length of the band. ‘He’s breathing and his hearts are beating so his autonomic brain is still functioning,’ she explained. ‘This collar will take over those functions and leave his autonomic brain free.’

‘What good will that do?’

‘He should be able to think with it,’ Romana replied.

Chris snorted in disbelief. ‘Think with his autonomic brain? The human brain doesn’t

work like that. The different functions are separated…’

‘The Professor isn’t human,’ she told him.

‘Ah.’

The Doctor was examining the damaged spectrograph, watched by Clare.

‘The book must have stored up vast amounts of sub atomic energy and suddenly released them when the machine was activated,’ the Doctor hypothesised. ‘Does anything strike you about that?’

Clare was confused. ‘What?’

‘It’s a very odd way for a book to behave.’ He abandoned the spectrograph, and picked up the book.

‘I would have thought that was obvious,’ Clare retorted.

The Doctor looked up from the book. ‘Never underestimate the obvious,’ he advised.

‘But what does that tell us?’

‘Nothing,’ replied the Doctor. ‘Obviously.’

‘Well?’

‘So obviously it was meant to tell us nothing, which is exactly the opposite function of a book. Therefore it isn’t a book!’

Clare was about to question the dubious logic behind this reasoning when a printer chattered into life, tucked away in a corner of the lab. She hurried over and tore off the printout. ‘It’s the results of a carbon dating test we ran,’ she explained, her eyes scanning the figures on the page. ‘Doctor! This says that it’s minus twenty thousand years old! What does that mean?’

The Doctor’s features paled. ‘Not only is this book not a book, but time is running backwards over it. I think I’d better return it as soon as possible - don’t you?’

The stranger had once more returned to his spacecraft. He stood on the bridge beside a scaled-down version of the hexagonal cone from the Think Tank station. The sphere was perched on the apex of the cone.

‘Playback!’ he ordered.

The holographic screen materialised before him, and the stranger saw himself standing in the Professor’s study, from the Professor’s perspective. ‘Further back,’ he commanded.

The picture broke up, and reformed as an image of the Doctor and Romana in the Professor’s study. The picture was clear apart from the features of the Doctor and Romana, whose forms were heavily distorted. Their faces were completely unrecognisable.

The stranger frowned angrily. ‘Trace memories of the book,’ he instructed.

The picture changed to an image of Chris Parsons in the Professor’s study, but again, his features were obscured.

‘He had great mind control,’ the stranger observed with a note of respect in his voice.

‘Find any trace of the book at all.

The picture broke up completely. Fragmentary images faded in and out without definition. Finally, the screen merely displayed static.

‘A brave man,’ the stranger said. ‘The effort will almost certainly prove fatal.’

‘The collar is functioning,’ said Romana. ‘Is there any trace of conscious thought in his mind, K9?’

‘Processing data, Mistress,’ reported K9. ‘Too early to tell. Another few seconds.’

‘Good,’ said Chris.

Romana stared at him. ‘What do you mean, good?’

27

‘Well don’t you see? When you work as a scientist, you don’t always know where you’re going, or that there is even anywhere to go, that there aren’t going to be big doors that stay permanently shut to you. But I look at all this marvellous stuff of yours and I know that a lot of things that seem impossible are possible. So good. I take it that you’re...’

‘Romana.’

‘No, I mean that you’re not from Earth?’

‘Mistress,’ interrupted K9. ‘The Professor’s condition is rapidly deteriorating.’

‘Isn’t there anything we can do?’ Romana asked desperately.

‘Negative, Mistress. The condition is terminal.’

‘But is he thinking?’ she urged. ‘Can he hear us?’

‘Minimal cerebral impulses detectable, Mistress.’

‘Can he talk?’

‘Negative. The speech centres of the brain are inoperative.’

Chris shrugged fatalistically. ‘Well, your collar was a nice idea, but…’

‘Shhh!’ exclaimed Romana. ‘Wait a minute.’ She put her head down on the Professor’s chest. ‘K9, can you amplify his heart beat?’

‘Affirmative, Mistress.’ K9 extended his probe to the Professor’s chest, and through K9’s speakers could be heard the fast, irregular beating of the Professor’s hearts.

‘Brilliant!’ exclaimed Romana delightedly.

‘What?’

‘The Professor is a brave and clever man,’ Romana said solemnly. ‘Listen.’

‘I don’t understand,’ Chris confessed.

‘He can’t talk, but he’s interfering with the collar. He’s beating his heart in Gallifreyan morse!’ Romana leaned close to the Professor’s head. ‘I can hear you, Professor. What do you want to tell us?’

The beats paused briefly, and then started again. Romana listened intently, translating the message aloud. '"Beware... The... Sphere... Beware... Skagra... Beware... Shada…

The… Secret… Is… In… The…"'

The beats suddenly stopped.

'He is dying, Mistress,' K9 reported.

'Professor!'

'All life function has now ceased, Mistress. The Professor is dead.'

Romana buried her face in her hands.

The Doctor rode back through Cambridge on his borrowed bicycle, the book safe in the bicycle's carrier basket. Crossing a single-lane footbridge across the river Cam, the Doctor was forced to come to a halt by a tall man standing in the middle of the bridge. The Doctor warily eyed a large silver sphere balanced in the stranger's hand.

'Doctor,' said the stranger.

'Yes,' replied the Doctor hesitantly. 'Who are you?'

'I am Skagra. I am the one who wants the book.'

The Doctor made an effort to cover the book in the carrier basket with the end of his scarf. 'Ah, well, I'm the Doctor, and you can't have it I'm afraid. I've hidden it.'

'Hidden it?' echoed Skagra, mockingly. 'You attempt to hide it from me?'

'Yes. It will be taken to a place of safety.'

'Where?'

'Oh, just a little place I have in mind,' smiled the Doctor.

'Doctor,' said Skagra calmly. 'You will give to me everything that you have in your mind... Your mind shall be mine!'

The Doctor considered this for a moment, and then replied. 'I'm not mad about your tailor,' he remarked, eyeing Skagra's 'borrowed' clothes.

The sphere rose from Skagra's hand, and floated unhurriedly towards the Doctor. The Doctor backed away, but the sphere continued towards him. He paused, and the sphere came closer, targeting in on his forehead.

At the last possible moment, the Doctor ducked, and pushed forward at the same time.

The sphere travelled over the Doctor's head and the Time Lord's feet engaged the bicycle pedals. Before the sphere could change direction, the Doctor was cycling off across the bridge, knocking Skagra aside.

Hovering for a moment to gain its bearings, the sphere then shot off in hot pursuit.

Skagra smiled, certain that the sphere would find its target, sooner or later. Unlike the Doctor, the sphere would not tire.

Ringing his bell at every corner to warn pedestrians and fellow cyclists, the Doctor rocketed through the back streets of Cambridge, relentlessly pursued by the sphere.

'"You leave the Pennsylvania Station 'bout a quarter to four / Read a magazine and then you're in Baltimore / Dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer / Than to have your ham and eggs in Carolina…"' A group of students were singing under a lamppost as the Doctor sped by, closely pursued by the sphere. The choristers were so involved in their singing that they failed to notice either the Doctor or the strange sight of the floating sphere. '"Chattanooga Choo-Choo, won't you choo-choo me home…"'

As the strains of their song receded into the distance, the Doctor swerved into a small side street, hoping to lose his pursuer, but with little success. At the next turn, he tried the same tactic again, swerving wildly across the lane and down an alleyway. To his horror, the book slipped from the basket, and fell to the ground. He glanced over his shoulder, hoping to have time to go back and retrieve it, but the sphere was almost upon him. Re-doubling his efforts, he cycled away.

Moments later, Skagra entered the lane, guided by a mental empathy with the sphere.

Spying the book, he bent and picked it up, smiling triumphantly. The prize was his; the Doctor's mind would be a bonus.

Emerging on to a street crowded with pedestrians, the Doctor abandoned the bicycle, resting it against a signpost that read "NO CYCLING". 'I beg your pardon,' he said to the sign, and then ran off through the crowds. The sphere homed in on the bicycle, and knocked it over before reorienting itself to the fleeing form of the Doctor and setting off in fresh pursuit. A throng of startled students parted obligingly for the hovering sphere.

The Doctor had entered a short alleyway, bordered on both sides by high brick walls.

One by one, he tried each of the doors along the alleyway, but they were all firmly locked.

Preparing to retrace his steps, he turned and saw the sphere enter the alley and start towards him.

In desperation, the Doctor turned his attention to the end of the alley, blocked by a tall wire mesh gate, padlocked shut. He checked the lock and rattled the gate, but to no avail.

He then tried scaling the mesh, but it was too fine to allow him a foothold. The sphere was very close as the Doctor dropped to the ground. He attempted to wriggle through the very narrow gap between the bottom of the gate and the road. He got his legs through, but then became stuck. Looking up in desperation, he saw to his alarm that the sphere was hovering close to his forehead.

The Doctor could hear the babbling of many overlapping voices as the sphere moved in to claim his mind...

29

5

Skagra

The distorted, overlapping babbling voices filled the Doctor's ears and the menacing silver sphere filled his vision. The Doctor thought he could hear a new, familiar sound mingled with the voices, and turned his face away from the sphere, to see the solidifying shape of the TARDIS in the alleyway.

The sphere retreated, apparently disorientated by this sudden arrival.

The police box door opened, and Romana stuck her head out. 'Doctor!' she called.

'Yes!' replied the Doctor, wriggling back out from under the gate.

'Hurry!'

He needed no further encouragement. Picking himself off the ground, he darted into the TARDIS, slamming the door behind him. Moments later the time craft dematerialised, leaving the sphere hovering alone in the alleyway.

After a few minutes of roving around like a dog trying to pick up a scent, the sphere moved off.

The Doctor leaned against the console with relief. ‘Romana, thank you,’ he said breathlessly. ‘Thank you very much... thank you so much...’ He paused. ‘K9, you took your time.’

‘It was K9 who traced you,’ explained Romana. ‘He picked up that voice babble.’

The Doctor had something more important on his mind. ‘Romana, we’ve got to get the book back.’

Romana was confused. ‘I thought that’s where…’

‘I dropped it,’ admitted the Doctor.

‘Dropped it!’ exclaimed Romana incredulously.

‘Yes, dropped it,’ replied the Doctor fiercely, annoyed at himself. ‘What was that thing chasing me?’ he asked K9.

‘Unidentified, Master,’ the robot dog reported. ‘Origin unknown.’

‘All we know is it attacked the Professor,’ Romana told him.

‘The Professor! How is he?’ the Doctor inquired, and repeated his question when Romana found herself unable to reply for a moment. ‘How is he?’

‘The Professor’s life is terminated, Master,’ K9 informed him, matter-of-factly.

‘Dead!’ The Doctor was horrorstruck.

‘We think that thing stole his mind,’ Romana told him. ‘The sphere.’

‘When did this happen?’

‘Just when...’

‘I thought you were meant to be looking after him.’

‘I had just gone back into the TARDIS,’ Romana tried to explain.

‘Why?’

Romana took a deep breath and braved an explanation. ‘I had just gone back into the

TARDIS for some milk.’

‘For some milk,’ echoed the Doctor quietly.

Romana nodded. ‘Yes.’

‘I see,’ he said, turning to the controls.

‘Well, otherwise he was going out to get some himself.’

The Doctor waved away her explanation. ‘You needn’t explain,’ he said as he prepared to materialise back in the Professor’s study.

As night fell, Clare slowly dozed off, sitting in a chair in the laboratory with her head resting in her arms on a table. She flinched slightly as the printer chattered into life again, but didn’t stir. Moments later, the machine shut down again.

Chris Parsons had been keeping a constant vigil over the Professor’s body, only leaving it to turn on lights as dusk fell outside. He found himself disturbed by the Professor’s open staring eyes, and eventually summoned up the nerve to close them, but his hand passed straight through the body. He gasped as the body vanished altogether.

‘Professor!’

As if in response, the TARDIS rematerialised back in the corner of the room, and the Doctor and Romana emerged.

‘Who are you?’ demanded the Doctor, instantly noticing Chris, still crouched on the floor.

‘Me? I’m Chris Parsons - Bristol Grammar School and Johns,’ he said automatically, getting to his feet.

‘Never heard of you,’ replied the Doctor dismissively, and then reconsidered. ‘Ah, You’re the one who’s been causing all this trouble are you?’

‘Me?’ responded Chris indignantly. ‘You’re the one who’s mucking about with time machines.’

‘How did you...’ began the Doctor.

‘I told him,’ Romana interjected.

‘Where’s the book?’ Chris inquired.

‘Where’s the Professor?’ countered the Doctor.

‘Well, he just... just…’

‘Just what?’

‘I don’t know,’ Chris admitted. ‘His body just vanished into thin air.’

‘What have you done with him?’ the Doctor demanded angrily. First the book and now the Professor had gone missing.

‘Doctor, please calm down,’ Romana interceded. ‘It’s not Chris’ fault. He’s not involved.’

The Doctor paused to consider Romana’s words, and then continued in a more reasonable tone. ‘Where was the body?’ he asked Chris.

‘Just here,’ Chris explained, pointing to a patch of carpet. ‘It disappeared just before you arrived.’

‘Here?’ asked the Doctor, bending down to examine the floor.

‘Yes.’

The Doctor passed his hands over the area, and then looked up. ‘Yes. He’s gone,’ he confirmed. ‘He must have been on his very last regeneration. Did you say that someone has stolen his mind?’ he asked Romana, as he stood back up.

‘Yes.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘That’s what he said to me.’

31

‘Who?’ asked Romana.

‘Called himself “Skagra”.’

‘Skagra?’ repeated Romana, thinking hard.

‘You know the name?’

‘Just before the Professor died, he said three things,’ Chris informed the Doctor.

‘What?’

Chris thought for a moment. ‘“Beware the sphere”...’

‘Now he tells me,’ muttered the Doctor.

‘“Beware Skagra”...’

‘And “Beware Shada”,’ added Romana.

‘Shada?’ echoed the Doctor.

‘Do you know the name?’ asked Romana.

‘Shada...’ repeated the Doctor, wracking his memory. ‘Shada... I’ve heard the name, but... does it mean anything to you?’ he asked Chris.

He shook his head. ‘Doesn’t mean anything to me.’

‘Well, Mr. Skagra, or whatever it is you call yourself - you have killed a Time Lord, and a very old friend of mine,’ The Doctor declared. ‘It’s time you and I had a little chat...

K9!’

The automaton emerged from the TARDIS in response to the call. ‘Master?’

‘K9, can you detect any trace of that sphere?’

‘Affirmative, Master, but it is far too weak to take a bearing.’

‘It must just be moping around looking for me,’ the Doctor speculated. ‘We’ll have to wait until it’s active again. Now listen, K9, let us know the moment you pick up a stronger signal.’

‘Affirmative, Master.’

‘Good, good.’

Romana approached the Doctor. ‘Doctor, if it’s still looking for you…’

‘Right,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘We’ll wait in the TARDIS.’

‘Excellent thought,’ said Romana.

‘Come on,’ the Doctor urged. ‘You too, Bristol,’ he told Chris.

Through the darkened, deserted streets of Cambridge, the sphere hovered, still searching for the Doctor without success. In the early morning, the sphere began returning to the spacecraft, travelling along the banks of the Cam.

The river was largely deserted at this time of the morning. A solitary figure, a middle-aged man, sat on the riverbank happily enjoying a spot of fishing. He failed to notice at first as a large sphere glided across the water in his direction. By the time he looked up and saw the rapidly approaching shape, it was too late to react.

The sphere swiftly attached itself to the hapless fisherman’s forehead. The man’s face filled with alarm as the sphere carried out its mind-draining process. A babble of voices filled the air and then, as the sphere detached itself, its victim toppled forward into the river.

The sphere resumed its journey.

Early morning light streamed through the laboratory windows and over the slumbering form of Clare Keightley. The printer chattered into life once more, and this time Clare awoke with a start. Blinking in the bright light, she realised that she'd slept right through the night, and from a quick glance at her watch, saw that it was now after seven.

'Chris?' she called, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. 'Chris? Are you there?' The 32

printer halted, and Clare went over to it, shaking her watch in disbelief at how long she'd slept. Tearing off the strip of paper, she stared at the results in surprise, and then looked around.

'Where's he got to?' she muttered, and pulled down a copy of the University Directory from a shelf. She flicked through the pages, and then ran a finger down one of the columns. '"Charlton, Charlton, Chester, Christie, Chronotis".'

Finding the address she required, Clare scribbled it down on the back of the printout, and stuffed it in her pocket. Stopping only to grab her coat and bag, she dashed out of the lab.

The Doctor, Romana and Chris were dozing in chairs around the TARDIS console when K9 suddenly became alert. 'Master!' he called.

The Doctor awoke instantly. 'Have you got something K9?'

'Affirmative Master,' K9 reported, as Romana and Chris awoke.

'The sphere is active. 5.7 miles at bearing 4.378. Velocity 15.3.'

The Doctor was already busy at the console, entering the coordinates. 'Good dog!' he praised K9.

K9's tail wagged in response.

As the police box began dematerialised from the Professor's study, there was a knocking at the door, and Clare entered to be greeted by the completely unexpected sight of a police box with a flashing light emitting a loud trumpeting sound. As Clare there dumbfounded, struggling to comprehend this phenomenon, the box faded away before her eyes, and she was left completely alone in the book-filled room, boggling at the space where the police box had just stood.

The sphere was nearing the end of its journey. It passed the car parked by the gate and set out across the field.

The TARDIS materialised near the edge of the field, and the Doctor, Chris and Romana emerged.

The Doctor pointed up at the sphere. ‘Hey! There it is!’ Even as he said this, the sphere disappeared from view, as it entered the shielded ship.

The Doctor turned to Romana. ‘Did you just see what I just didn’t see?’ he inquired quietly.

‘No.’

‘Neither did I,’ agreed the Doctor.

‘It just vanished,’ added Chris.

‘That’s what I said!’ The Doctor studied their surroundings. ‘Mind that cow-pat,’ he advised, as he walked off.

Romana turned back to the police box and called through the doorway, ‘Come on, K9.’

Skagra stood on the bridge of his ship. He had changed back into his previous outfit; consisting of a white tunic and trousers with silver trimmings, a long flowing silver cape, silver boots and a wide-brimmed white hat.

The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey rested in Skagra’s hands. The book was proving to be an enigma. The sphere silently entered the chamber, and hovered obediently as Skagra turned to acknowledge its arrival.

‘Report,’ he instructed.

The sphere settled back onto its playback cone, and a holographic image appeared.

Skagra watched with increasing annoyance as a scene of the TARDIS arriving and rescu-ing the Doctor was displayed. The picture froze on an image of the Doctor about to enter the police box.

‘Continue,’ Skagra instructed.

The picture unfroze, and continued until the TARDIS had dematerialised.

Skagra moved closer. ‘What is that machine?’ he demanded.

The image changed to a computer-generated outline of the TARDIS exterior, accompanied by a complex array of data. As this flashed up, the ship spoke. ‘My

Lord, it displays the characteristics of a Gallifreyan Time Capsule. Type 39, possible Type 40.'

'Present whereabouts?' Skagra wanted to know.

'In close proximity, my Lord. Intruders are approaching the ship.'

'Show me!'

The holographic image reformed to show the Doctor and his party approaching across the field.

The Doctor and K9 were at the front of the group exploring the field. Romana and Chris hung back cautiously. K9 suddenly pulled to a halt, but the Doctor continued on, and suddenly struck his head against something hard and invisible.

Romana and Chris looked puzzled as the Doctor rubbed his head. 'Hold it!' he called back to them. 'Don't move!' He reached up and felt the invisible obstruction before him.

The Doctor was reminded of lessons he'd once taken from Marcel Marceau, only this time there was no need to act as if there was nothing there.

The Doctor felt his way along part of one side of the ship's hull before speaking again.

'K9,' he said at last, 'is there something here?'

'Affirmative, Master.'

'Then why didn't you warn me, you stupid animal?'

'I assumed you could see it, Master.'

Romana and Chris approached. 'What is it, K9?' asked Romana, as Chris reached up to feel for himself.

'A spacecraft, Mistress, of very advanced design. Many of its functions are beyond my capacity to analyse.'

The Doctor whistled in amazement, but to his chagrin, Romana simply nodded.

'If I'd built something that clever, I'd want people to see it,' Chris observed.

'What's it powered by?' inquired the Doctor.

'Insufficient data.'

'Aren't we all,' the Doctor replied. 'Where does it come from?'

'Insufficient data.'

Romana moved over to K9. ‘What does it look like?’ she asked.

‘Very large, Mistress.’

‘How large?’ added Chris.

‘One hundred metres long,’ K9 reported.

‘One hundred metres!’ exclaimed the Doctor. ‘That should keep the cows guessing.’

He looked up, trying to visualise the ship. ‘There must be an entrance somewhere.’

Chris looked around, trying to make himself useful, and suddenly saw to his amazement, a faded red carpet at his feet. ‘What’s that carpet doing there?’ he asked. His question went unanswered.

‘The sphere disappeared about here,’ said Romana, pointing.

‘Got to be an entrance...’ muttered the Doctor, turning around. He stared at his feet.

‘What’s this carpet doing here?’

34

Skagra had been observing the conversation between the Doctor, Romana Chris and K9 on the holographic display. ‘Admit them,’ he instructed.

‘My lord,’ replied the ship.

The Doctor and his companions were now standing on the carpet. ‘The door is opening, Master,’ K9 reported.

‘Affirmative, K9, affirmative,’ replied the Doctor, and cautiously began to climb the invisible ramp. ‘Come on, K9. Heel,’ he called down to the dog.

Chris, Romana and K9 carefully followed the Doctor up the invisible ramp and into the ship. As soon as the entered the craft, their surrounding instantly became visible. They found themselves in a long, hexagonal shaped corridor with gleaming white walls. The Doctor began moving up the passage, followed by Romana, Chris and K9 in single file.

Chris was visibly impressed. ‘Better than an old police box,’ he commented.

‘Shhh,’ replied the Doctor indignantly. ‘K9, any sign of that deranged billiard ball?’

‘Master?’

‘The gaggleback, the beastie.’

K9 was none the wiser. ‘Master?’

‘The sphere!’ exclaimed the Doctor.

‘All signal sources are confused, Master.’

The Doctor frowned. ‘Romana, I’d feel happier if you three went outside again,’ he confided to her quietly. ‘No point us all walking into the spider’s web.’

She disagreed. ‘No Doctor, I’ll stay. You might need help.’

The Doctor started to protest. ‘I...’

At that moment, a sharply defined spinning cube of intense light engulfed Romana, Chris and K9. It then disappeared, taking the trio with it.

The Doctor stared at the empty space where his companions had stood only a moment earlier. ‘Romana!’ he called, and frantically looked around, searching for any trace of them. As he turned to look back up the corridor, he saw Skagra standing a short distance away.

‘They will not be harmed, Doctor,’ Skagra assured him. ‘For the moment.’

‘I’m not very impressed by the party tricks, Skagra,’ replied the Doctor contemptuously. ‘That is your name isn’t it?’

‘These party tricks, Doctor, are purely functional; their purpose precisely defined. As is mine.’

The Doctor changed tack. ‘Where have you taken my companions?’

Skagra ignored the question. ‘Come with me, Doctor.’ He led the Doctor towards the bridge.

The Doctor appeared disinterested in his surroundings and instead continued his questioning. ‘Skagra, what have you done with the Professor’s mind?’

‘It will be put to a more useful purpose,’ Skagra replied curtly.

‘I would argue that it was serving a very useful purpose where it was.’

‘Not to me,’ Skagra stated.

The Doctor stiffened. ‘You realise he had died?’

‘Only his mind was of use to me,’ Skagra informed the Doctor, ‘not his life.’

‘You take a very proprietorial attitude to other people’s brains.’ the Doctor observed.

Skagra smiled thinly. ‘It seems to me that Time Lords take a very proprietorial view of the Universe,’ he observed pointedly.

The Doctor was taken aback by Skagra’s familiarity with his own race. ‘Just exactly

who are you, Skagra?’

‘That knowledge will be of no use to you.’

‘Then I think you may as well tell me,’ the Doctor reasoned.

‘And I think I may as well not,’ said Skagra. ‘We have more important matters to discuss.’

Clare had recovered from her initial shock at witnessing the departure of the TARDIS, and was now searching the Professor’s rooms with increasing concern. She checked the kitchen, and then returned to the study. ‘Chris?’ she called. ‘Professor Chronotis?’

She stopped, noticing Chris’s coat lying over a chair. ‘Chris?’ Her eyes then moved to take in the general chaotic state of the room. The Professor’s books were scattered about the floor. She looked around the floor, but finding nothing to indicate the disappearance of both Chris and the Professor, she grabbed her bag and ran out of the Professor’s rooms, down the staircase and across the courtyard - straight into Wilkin.

‘Mind out where you’re going now,’ the porter warned, not unkindly. He picked up her dropped bag.

Clare gratefully accepted it from him. ‘I’m sorry,’ she apologised. She was about to run off again, but hesitated. ‘You don’t know where Professor Chronotis has gone, do you?’ she inquired breathlessly.

‘Now, now, calm down,’ Wilkin advised. ‘Isn’t he in his room?’

Clare shook her head adamantly. ‘No, I’ve just come from there.’

Wilkin scratched his head just below the brim of his hat. ‘Well that’s funny. He didn’t come out this way. I’ll tell you what, if you want to leave a message, I’ll see that he gets it.’

‘Look,’ said Clare, ‘it’s just it’s terribly urgent. A book that a friend of mine was taking to him… well, I think it’s very dangerous.’

‘Oh,’ replied the porter knowingly. ‘Well all I say is people shouldn’t write things if they don’t want people to read them.’

‘No, you don’t understand,’ Clare insisted. ‘The book itself – it’s atomically unstable.

It seems to be absorbing radioactivity. I think it's very, very dangerous.'

Wilkin frowned. 'A book's doing that?'

'Yes. We must find the Professor!'

Clare's fierce determination had made an impression on the old Cambridge porter. 'All right then miss. I'll tell you what. You go back to his room and I'll ring around the College and see if I can find out where he's got to.'

Clare started off apprehensively back towards the room, and then hesitated. 'But where to look? It's...' She caught the porter's reassuring smile. 'All right. Yes, I'll go back.' She walked back across the courtyard.

Wilkin shook his head as he made his way to his lodge to begin tracing the Professor's whereabouts. 'I don't know,' he muttered. 'They'll publish anything these days...'

Skagra escorted the Doctor on to the bridge of his spacecraft. Skagra went over to one of the couches and picked up the book. He weighed it thoughtfully in his hand.

'This book, Doctor...' he began.

'Which book?' the Doctor bluffed. Skagra passed it to him. 'This book?' He flicked through it and then handed it back to Skagra. 'I've read it. It's rubbish.'

Skagra patiently returned it to the Time Lord. 'Then perhaps you would read it to me?'

he purred.

'I have a very boring reading voice,' the Doctor advised him. 'By the time I'd got to 36

the bottom of the first page you'd be asleep, I'd escape, and then where would you be?'

Skagra's voice took on a menacing tone. 'Read it to me.'

'I presume you can't read Gallifreyan then?' the Doctor inquired.

'Like a native,' Skagra assured him. 'Read it to me, Doctor.'

'All right. Are you standing comfortably?'

'I am.'

'Then I'll sit down.' The Doctor sat down on the nearest of the couches, and then noticed the sphere perched on the cone next to the seat. He blanched visibly at the memory of his last encounter with the device, and moved across the chamber to the other couch.

‘Begin,’ instructed Skagra.

The Doctor shrugged, opened the book to the first page of text and began to read. His words were nonsense and gobbledygook. After a couple of lines, he paused. ‘I’m para-phrasing, of course.’

‘Doctor...’ Skagra began warningly.

‘Shh,’ replied the Doctor, pointing to the page. ‘This is a good bit...’ He read another line of meaningless sounds. Suddenly a look of mock worry clouded the Doctor’s face, and he began to hunt through the book. ‘Skagra,’ he said, looking up ‘Do you realise this book doesn’t make one bit of sense?’

‘Doctor, a fool would realise it was written in code.’

The Doctor stared back at the book. ‘Skagra!’

‘What?’

‘This thing’s written in code!’ the Doctor declared. ‘How am I doing?’ he added.

‘I believe you know the code,’ Skagra told him.

The Doctor was all innocence. ‘Who, me?’

‘Yes.’

‘Oh, no, no. I’m afraid I’m very stupid,’ the Doctor insisted. ‘Very stupid. I am very, very stupid.’

‘Doctor, I believe you as a Time Lord know this code, and you will give that knowledge to me!’

‘There’s no point in giving me orders,’ the Doctor reminded him, ‘I’m very, very stupid.’

‘That is not an order.’

‘No?’

‘It is a statement of fact.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Ah, how stupid of me,’ he grinned.

Skagra made a small quick gesture with one of his hands, and the sphere rose into the air and approached the Doctor. ‘You will give me that knowledge because you have no choice.’

The Doctor watched the sphere, his face strangely devoid of fear. ‘Ah, well I don’t know about that,’ he replied blithely. ‘I don’t know about anything in fact. I’m an

appall-ingly stupid person.' This last assertion seemed to be delivered with complete sincerity.

'That, Doctor, will soon be very true,' Skagra assured him.

The sphere attached itself to the Doctor's forehead, and the babble of voices could be heard once more. The strange sounds mingled with a long cry of pain from the Doctor, and he collapsed.

37

6

Dead Man

The Doctor's companions were trapped. The cube of light had transported them to a totally featureless square chamber devoid of even a door. The walls were of the same design as the corridor. After a thorough examination of the walls, Chris turned away in disgust. 'Not even a door,' he muttered darkly, and then added thoughtfully, 'we must have got in here by some sort of matter transference.'

'Very clever,' replied Romana sardonically.

'Oh, I suppose you do this sort of thing the whole time.'

Worry had bred irritability. 'Yes actually,' Romana snapped, and knelt down beside their fellow prisoner. 'K9, can't you pick up any trace of the Doctor?'

'Negative, Mistress. Every signal is shielded.'

Romana reached out and clicked open one of the robot's side panels. She began adjusting some of K9's internal circuitry.

'I was meant to be delivering a paper to the Astronomical Society tonight,' said Chris suddenly, trying to make light conversation.

'Oh yes,' replied Romana, not really listening. 'Can you pick up anything now, K9?'

'Negative, Mistress.'

Romana frowned, and continued fiddling with the automaton's wiring.

‘Yes,’ continued Chris, oblivious to Romana’s disinterest. ‘Trying to disprove the pos-sibility of life on other planets.

‘Oh yes.’

‘Well, I can deliver it next month...’

‘Now try,’ Romana instructed K9.

‘... Will have to be a complete rewrite though.’

‘Triple negative, Mistress.’

‘Curious substance, this wall,’ remarked Chris, brushing his hand over the gleaming white reflective surface.

Romana clicked K9’s inspection panel shut. ‘Oh blast it,’ she cursed.

Obediently, K9 extended his blaster and fired at the wall. The laser beam bounced off the angled, reflective surfaces of the cell walls. Romana and Chris throw themselves to the floor to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

Moments later, the beam dissipated, and the pair dusted themselves down.

‘Apologies Mistress,’ said K9.

‘Not at all,’ replied Romana graciously.

‘The wall is blast-proof,’ the robot continued.

‘It was a good try, K9,’ Romana assured him.

‘Mistress!’ K9 reported suddenly. ‘I am picking up faint signals.’

‘What is it? Can you let us hear it?’

‘Affirmative Mistress.’ The babble of voices began playing through K9’s speakers.

‘Sounds different this time,’ Chris observed.

‘Affirmative,’ replied K9. ‘A new voice has been added.’

‘A new voice?’ queried Romana.

‘Affirmative. It is the Doctor,’ K9 reported.

Romana stared at Chris in horror.

The Doctor lay slumped across one of the couches on the bridge, completely immobile and without any signs of life. Skagra, the sphere and the book had gone.

The babble of voices had ceased.

‘Are you positive, K9?’ asked Romana, as she paced the tiny cell in a state of considerable agitation. ‘Absolutely negative? Nothing at all?’

‘Affirmative. No signals on any frequency, Mistress.’

‘Oh, I wish we could get out of here!’ she exclaimed angrily. Suddenly, the spinning cube of light reappeared, engulfing Romana. Before Chris and K9 could react, the cube vanished once more, taking Romana with it.

‘That’s it!’ shouted Chris joyously.

‘Please explain,’ requested K9.

‘Well that’s what you have to say; “I wish we could get out of here”...’ Chris waited expectantly, but nothing happened.

‘Oh, I wish we could get out of here!’ he repeated angrily, and banged his fist on the wall.

K9 extended his blaster once more, and Chris spun round hastily. ‘No, no, K9. No, good dog.’ He slumped down despondently until he was sitting against one wall of the cramped prison cell. ‘How did she get out and not me?’

‘Insufficient data,’ replied K9.

‘Insufficient data! Insufficient data!’ mocked Chris. ‘Oh why did I ever let myself get involved in this?’

‘Insufficient data,’ came the unhelpful reply from his robotic cell mate.

Romana materialised in the cube of bright light, and stumbled as it dissipated, leaving her standing back in the central passageway of the spacecraft. She looked up to see Skagra standing a short distance away, holding the sphere.

‘What have you done to the Doctor?’ she demanded angrily.

‘Nothing you would like to hear about,’ Skagra assured her.

‘Let me see him!’

‘You would not enjoy it. I have taken his mind.’ Skagra walked up to her, and with a iron grip, took hold of her arm with his free hand. ‘Come!’ he ordered, and began moving her down the corridor towards the ship’s exit.

‘Let go of me!’ Romana protested, struggling wildly. ‘Who are you? What do you want?’

‘I want many things,’ Skagra replied. ‘At the moment I want you to stop struggling.

Come!’ He pushed her through the hatchway and down the invisible ramp.

Romana continued to struggle. ‘Where are you taking me?’ she demanded angrily.

Skagra remained impassive.

‘Where are you taking me?’ she repeated.

‘Quiet!’ he instructed. ‘Or I shall use the sphere on you too!’ As if to back up his threat, a thin babble of voices came from the sphere.

‘Where are you taking me?’ Romana persisted, determined not to allow herself to be

threatened by her captor. By now they had reached the bottom of the ramp.

‘Your traveling capsule,’ Skagra told her. He escorted her across the field towards the TARDIS.

‘If you think I’m going to open the door and let you into it you’re going to be disappointed,’ she said defiantly as they arrived beside the police box.

Skagra let go of Romana’s arm. ‘Then it is just as well I have the Doctor’s key,’ he replied mockingly, producing the TARDIS key on its chain from his tunic pocket. He unlocked the police box door and shoved her roughly inside.

‘Ow!’ she protested, as he pushed her across the console room.

‘No doubt you also refuse to operate the capsule for me,’ he speculated with a slight smile.

‘Romana rubbed her bruised arm. ‘Of course,’ she snapped at him. ‘And no one can operate it other than the Doctor or myself - so bad luck!’

‘If the Doctor can operate it, then so can I,’ Skagra declared confidently. He placed the sphere on the console, and with one hand resting on the ball’s surface, began skillfully operating the controls with the other.

As Skagra finished programming the dematerialisation sequence, Romana rushed forward and tried to pull him away from the controls, but he pushed her roughly aside, and threw the take-off switch.

The TARDIS dematerialised.

Clare was once more searching the Professor's rooms, looking for anything that might shed light on either the mysterious book or the equally mysterious absences of the Professor, Chris and the Doctor. Not to mention the spectacle of a certain disappearing blue police box.

She rummaged through the drawers of an old writing desk, but without success. Abandoning the desk, she turned to the cluttered mantlepiece, and found a large, old-fashioned rusty key. Retaining the key, she continued to search the mantlepiece, and then crouched down to examine an old small wooden cabinet. The doors were locked, but the keyhole looked as if it would accommodate the key she'd just found.

Clare put the lock to the test. With a satisfyingly loud click, the key turned in the lock, and she pulled open the doors to reveal a panel of dusty circuitry, half-obscured by junk piled up in front of it. Pulling out a tennis racket, cricket pads and other bits and pieces, she leaned in for a better look at the strange controls. As she did so, she placed her hands on the wall above the cabinet, to steady herself.

The wall rotated inwards at the pressure of her touch, and she jumped back with a cry of alarm. The movement of the wall panel had revealed a panel of levers, dials and switches. Clare got to her feet and gingerly touched one of the controls. The whole panel instantly came to life with an array of blinking lights, quivering dials, and a low hum. At the same time, heavy wooden shutters banged shut across the windows of their own ac-cord.

This made Clare jump once more, and then, recovering her wits, tried another button.

To her alarm, the room started to shake violently, as if disturbed by some tremendous force. The needles on all of the dials jumped to maximum, and as Clare leaned closer, desperately searching for a control to reverse these effects, a section of the equipment exploded, and she collapsed to the shuddering floor, stunned into unconsciousness.

Wilkin arrived outside the door to the Professor's rooms. He had to his annoyance, been completely unable to track down the Professor's whereabouts, and had come to inform the 40

girl who was searching for Professor Chronotis of his lack of success.

He knocked and waited. There was no reply. 'Hello?' he called, and knocked again.

‘Hello? Miss? Are you in there, Miss?’ Receiving no reply, he shrugged, and opened the door.

Wilkin had witnessed many unusual things in his years as a porter at St Cedd’s College, but nothing could have prepared him for what he saw next. Of the Professor s rooms, there was no sign. All that lay beyond the door was a shimmering blue void that seemed to stretch away into infinity.

The Doctor stirred.

He took a long deep breath, and his eyes flickered open. He raised himself groggily into a sitting position, and stared vacantly around the bridge. He picked up one end of his long, multi-coloured scarf and began fiddling with its tassels in an aimless fashion.

‘Very... stupid,’ he muttered slowly and thickly. He half-closed his eyes, as if trying to grasp hold of a fleeting thought.

‘Very... stupid,’ he said again, and frowned deeply. Suddenly his thoughtful expression was replaced by a broad toothy grin. ‘Ha!’ he declared loudly. ‘Very stupid!’ The Doctor leapt to his feet, and instantly regretted it. He was still dizzy, and his head swam. He shook it to clear his thoughts. ‘Skagra?’ he called, noticing that he was alone.

‘My Lord has departed,’ replied a disembodied voice, in soft, distinctly feminine tones.

The Doctor spun round, looking for the speaker, but the room was, as he had already discovered, deserted. ‘Who’s that?’ he demanded.

‘My Lord Skagra.’

The Doctor turned again, trying to pinpoint the voice, but it seemed to be omnipresent.

‘No! Who’s speaking?’

‘The servant of Skagra. I am the ship.’

‘The ship?’ said the Doctor. ‘A talking ship?’

‘Correct.’

‘I’ve never met a talking ship before,’ admitted the Time Lord. ‘A talking dog, yes, but a talking spaceship, no. Skagra must be hard up for friends...’ This reminded the Doctor of something. ‘Will you tell me where my companions are?’

‘I will not. You are an enemy of Skagra,’ stated the ship, matter-of-factly. ‘Any orders you give me are hostile to my Lord.’

‘Oh, I don’t mean any harm,’ the Doctor grinned.

‘I do not understand why you are moving,’ the ship confessed.

‘What?’

‘You are dead.’

The Doctor looked surprised. ‘Am I?’

‘Your entire mind was to be seized into the sphere.’

‘Ah, well it wasn’t, was it? The trick on these occasions is not to resist. I just let the thing believe I was very stupid and it then didn’t pull nearly hard enough,’ the Doctor explained. ‘It got a copy but left me with the original intact. Understand?’

The ship paused. ‘No, I do not.’

‘No,’ considered the Doctor. ‘Nor do I. Perhaps I really am stupid. No! I know, I am dead!’ he declared.

‘That computes with my Lord’s actions,’ the ship concurred.

‘Then will you tell me where my companions are?’

‘I cannot accept your orders,’ the ship informed him. ‘You are an enemy of Skagra.’

‘An enemy, not true,’ the Doctor corrected it. ‘If I am dead, then I am an ex-enemy of 41

Skagra’s. Correct?’

‘Correct,’ the ship concurred.

‘A dead man can hardly be a threat to anyone, correct?’

‘Correct.’

‘Then,’ continued the Doctor, choosing his words very carefully, ‘if I am dead, I cannot give orders that would be any kind of threat to Skagra. Correct?’

‘Correct,’ replied the ship after a pause.

‘Then… will you please arrange the release of my companions?’

‘I have orders not to,’ the ship informed him. ‘Their release would constitute a threat to Skagra.’

‘But I am ordering you to,’ the Doctor reminded the ship. ‘And as we have established the fact that I am dead, that I am incapable of ordering anything that would threaten Skagra, so if I order you to release them, it doesn’t threaten him. Will you release them?’

‘They will be released.’

The Doctor breathed heavily. ‘Excellent! Thank you.’ He breathed again, and noticed that he was beginning to find the action difficult. ‘It’s getting very stuffy in here,’ he rasped.

‘You are dead?’ inquired the ship.

‘Yes,’ gasped the Doctor. ‘I thought we’d sorted that out.’

‘I am programmed to conserve resources. Since there are no live beings in this area I have shut down the oxygen supply,’ the ship told him.

‘What?’ gasped the Doctor again. He was becoming dizzy with asphyxiation. Everything was becoming red and hazy from his perspective. He sank to the floor, his head pounding. As he slowly slipped into merciful unconsciousness, he heard the ship speak one more line. The words buzzed in his head.

‘Dead men do not require oxygen...’

42

7

The Krargs

‘Not a clue,’ Chris muttered darkly, as he paced the tiny cell. As if on cue, the cube of light suddenly appeared, engulfing both Chris and K9, and disappeared with them, as it had done before.

The spinning cube deposited Chris and K9 back in the central corridor of the ship, the exact spot in fact from which they had originally been abducted.

‘Hey! We did it!’ Chris exclaimed delightedly.

K9 scanned the corridor. ‘We must find the Doctor Master,’ he insisted with evident urgency. ‘He is in danger.’

K9’s obvious concern subdued Chris, and he cautiously followed the robot dog as he glided off in the direction of the bridge.

Moments later, they stood before the door on to the bridge. ‘Stand clear,’ instructed K9

importantly. ‘Preparing blaster fire.’

Chris moved to one side of the door, and spotted two buttons on the wall, marked

“Open” and “Close”. He pressed the first one, and the door slid open.

‘Most satisfactory,’ said K9 glumly.

Chris shrugged apologetically, and edged into the bridge. He immediately found it more difficult to breathe, noticing that the air was very thin and cold. He could however feel fresh, warm air flooding into the room. He spotted the Doctor’s recumbent form, and rushed over to assist him. ‘Doctor!’

‘Oxygen levels returning to normal.’

Chris stopped, and looked round for the source of the voice. ‘Who said that?’ he demanded.

‘I am the ship. The servant of the Lord Skagra.’

‘Where’s that voice coming from?’ Chris asked K9.

‘Impossible to pinpoint source,’ the dog admitted. ‘It pervades the whole ship.’

The Doctor stirred, and began to come round.

‘The Doctor - he’s all right!’ Chris declared delightedly.

‘No I’m not,’ the Time Lord corrected him, groggily getting to his feet. ‘I’m dead.’

‘What?’

‘I’ve been nearly too clever by three-quarters,’ he confessed, rubbing his head.

‘You never seem to do anything by halves,’ observed Chris with a grin.

‘I persuaded the ship I was dead and it cut off my oxygen supply.’

‘You what?’

‘It won’t take orders from an enemy of Skagra,’ the Doctor explained patiently. ‘But since it believes I am dead...’ He hesitated, and then corrected himself loudly. ‘Since I am dead, the ship had no reason not to accept my orders.’

Chris was still lost. ‘What?’

‘The logic is peculiar, but acceptable,’ K9 agreed with his master.

‘It only resumed the supply of oxygen when you came in,’ the Doctor continued.

‘You’re still alive, officially.’

‘That’s reassuring,’ replied Chris dryly.

‘Where’s Romana?’ asked the Doctor suddenly.

Chris glanced around the room before replying. ‘I thought she was with you. Whatever took us off came back for her.’

‘Skagra!’ the Doctor exclaimed. ‘He must have her as well, now.’

’As well as what?’

‘That book, and a copy of my mind.’

Chris was lost once more. ‘He’s got what?’

‘A copy of my mind,’ repeated the Doctor. ‘In his sphere. He thinks I know the key to the book.’

There was a pause. ‘Well, what is the key?’ Chris inquired.

‘I don’t know. I deliberately didn’t think about it in case he did use the sphere on me.

Come on, we can trace them from the TARDIS.’ The Doctor started towards the door.

‘Negative, Master,’ said K9.

The Doctor halted. ‘What do you mean?’

‘The TARDIS has gone,’ K9 explained.

‘Has what?’ he demanded indignantly.

‘Gone, Master.’

Romana watched from the far side of the console room, eyeing Skagra warily as he piloted the TARDIS, confidently manipulating the controls whilst still touching the sphere.

‘Anyone can dematerialise a TARDIS, but you’d be a real safety hazard at the major controls. That’s why they’re booby- trapped,’ she informed him.

Skagra shook his head without looking up. ‘Not true,’ he stated.

‘How do you know?’ Romana challenged him.

Skagra tapped the surface of the sphere by way of a reply.

‘You know everything?’ she asked unbelievingly.

‘It’s all in here,’ he assured her.

Romana began to edge towards the console, but before she could get within arm's reach of the controls, the sphere rose into the air, and drifted slowly towards her with a ter-rifying babble of noises. Romana backed off, and the sphere returned to the console.

'I wouldn't go near it if I were you,' Skagra advised, placing his palm back on the sphere's surface. 'It can do far worse things to you than you can possibly do to it.'

Romana tried to ignore the threat. 'I don't see why you want to steal an old crock like this anyway. You've got a perfectly good ship of your own.'

Skagra looked up and smiled. 'Impressed with it, were you?'

Romana remained silent.

'I should hope you were. I designed it. But it has certain limitations, and what the Time Lords have hidden I shall need Time Lord technology to find.'

'You seem to know a lot about the Time Lords,' Romana observed. 'Who are you?

What do you want?'

'Have you heard of a man called Salyavin?' Skagra inquired.

'Salyavin!' Romana exclaimed. 'You're Salyavin?'

Skagra frowned. 'You asked me two questions if you remember.'

'What do you mean?'

'Quiet. I must concentrate,' Skagra instructed, and started the rematerialisation sequence.

44

An enormous spaceship, large enough to carry Skagra's own craft a hundred times over, drifted through a sector of space far from any charted routes. The TARDIS materialised on the ship's command deck, a large chamber featuring an enormously wide screen, which looked out over a wide stretch of the galaxy.

The TARDIS door opened, and Skagra emerged with the sphere, followed by Romana.

Romana was instantly captivated by the view through the window. 'Where are we?'

she inquired.

‘On my command ship,’ replied Skagra.

‘Command ship!’ echoed Romana mockingly. ‘And what do you hope to command?’

‘More than you can possibly imagine,’ Skagra assured her.

‘I have a very vivid imagination.’

‘Then I suggest you use it whilst it is still yours. It may be in for some shocks,’ Skagra said nastily.

‘Welcome back to your ship, my Lord,’ said a deep and sibilant voice.

Romana spun round, and stared up at the towering form of a creature that appeared to be composed entirely of large scale-like segments of crystallised coal.

The Doctor and Chris were coming to terms with the loss of the TARDIS.

‘So where’s he gone?’ Chris wanted to know.

‘Or when,’ the Doctor added. ‘What?’

‘Time machine,’ the Doctor reminded him.

‘Oh yes,’ replied Chris doubtfully. ‘Yes. He must have taken Romana because she can operate it.’

‘So can he. He’s got my mind in that sphere of his. Everything I know is at his disposal.’

‘There’s one thing he doesn’t know,’ Chris corrected him.

‘What?’

‘You’re still alive.’

‘Shhh!’ warned the Doctor, furtively looking around the bridge. ‘I’m dead, remember.’

‘Doctor,’ said Chris quietly, ‘why doesn’t the ship realise that?’

‘It’s only programmed to obey instructions, not to think about them. Blind logic.’ The Doctor paused, and sat down on one of the couches, deep in thought. ‘Let’s work out what we know,’ he suggested. ‘We know that...’ he hesitated. ‘Er, let’s work out what we don’t know.’

‘Right,’ Chris agreed, sitting down opposite him.

‘We don’t know where Skagra has taken Romana, we don’t know why he wants the book, we don’t know what he’s going to do...’

‘That’s enough “don’t knows” to win an election,’ Chris observed.

‘Hmmpphh,’ was the Doctor’s only response.

‘This ship must know where he’s gone,’ said Chris suddenly.

The Doctor jumped to his feet. ‘Ship! Speaking to you as a late lamented enemy of your Lord Skagra, I command you to tell me where he has gone.’

‘I do not have that information,’ the ship replied.

‘Don’t know, don’t know, don’t know!’ exclaimed the Doctor angrily.

Romana watched nervously as Skagra set up the sphere on a console on the command deck. After a while the waiting became too much for her. ‘Why won’t you tell me?’ she demanded. ‘Why won’t you just say what you’re trying to do?’

45

Skagra looked up from his work, and stared at her quietly. Then he came over and led her to the wide panoramic screen that dominated the chamber. ‘Tell me what you see,’ he told her.

‘Stars,’ replied Romana. ‘Billions of them.’

‘What are they doing?’

‘Doing?’ echoed Romana.

‘Yes.’

‘What do you mean, what are they doing? They’re just there. They’re...’ Romana hesitated, lost for an explanation.

‘Exactly,’ said Skagra. ‘Spinning uselessly through the void. And around them, billions of people spinning uselessly through their lives.’

‘Says who?’ Romana challenged him.

‘I say.’

‘And who are you?’

‘What I am now is not important,’ admitted Skagra modestly. ‘But what I, what we all, shall be.’

‘What are you?’ Romana persisted.

‘Shhh!’ he advised her, and cupped his hands together. ‘Look,’ he invited, holding them out to her to look inside.

She looked inside, mystified. ‘What?’

‘What do you see?’ he asked.

‘Nothing,’ Romana replied. ‘Air.’

‘Billions of atoms spinning at random,’ Skagra informed her. ‘Expanding energy, running down, achieving nothing. Entropy. Like the stars. But what is the one thing that stands against entropy, against random decay?’ He held out one hand to her this time.

‘Life! See how the atoms are arranged here. They have meaning, purpose. And what more meaning and purpose than in here?’ he inquired, indicating his head. He regarded her perplexed expression. ‘You do not understand me. Your mind is too limited.’

Skagra began moving closer towards her, and Romana instinctively backed away, straight into a group of three of the coal-like creatures. She flinched away from their imposing bulk. ‘What are these... things?’

‘These?’ replied Skagra. ‘My Krargs. They shall be the servants of the new generation.’

‘New generation?’ repeated Romana. ‘A new race?’

‘Not a new race,’ Skagra corrected her.

‘People, new people?’

‘Not people,’ Skagra replied. ‘A new person.’

Romana was at once both baffled and horror-struck by the implications of Skagra’s words. She was about to question him further when the Krarg Commander spoke.

‘My Lord.’

‘Speak,’ Skagra instructed.

‘We shall shortly require new personnel.’

‘Operate the vat,’ Skagra ordered.

The Krarg inclined its massive head. ‘As my Lord commands.’ It moved off towards a small, open-sided chamber adjoining the Command Bridge.

‘You shall see this,’ Skagra informed Romana, and led her after the Krarg.

Romana saw as they approached the annexe, that it contained several bath-shaped vats full of a heavy green gas. Each vat was connected to a control console. ‘What...’ she began.

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Skagra motioned her to silence. ‘Shhh...’

The Krarg Commander operated a series of controls linked to the nearest of the vats, and a wire skeleton started glowing red, suspended in the heavy, swirling vapour. As Romana watched, crystals began congealing around the wire, blackening as they cooled.

More crystals formed attached to these. Very quickly, the shape of a Krarg formed.

Within the space of a minute, the newly formed Krarg was complete. It pulled itself out of the vat and stood to attention before Skagra. ‘What is your command, Master?’ it asked.

‘So,’ said Chris glumly. ‘Back to square one.’

‘That’s it!’ exclaimed the Doctor triumphantly.

‘What?’

‘Square one!’ repeated the Doctor. ‘That’s where we’ve got to go, if we want to find out who Skagra is and what he’s up to. Once we know that, we’ll know where to find him.

Ship! I order you to take us to where your Lord Skagra last came from.’

‘That order does not conflict with my programmed instructions,’ the ship conceded. ‘I will activate launch procedures.’

The Doctor and Chris grinned at each other in triumph.

‘Launch procedures activated.’

Deep within the recesses of the craft, the ship’s last phrase triggered a computer sequence in a small chamber containing a single bath-shaped vat exactly the same as those on the command ship.

In response to the ship’s announcement that launch procedures had been activated, a wire skeleton lit up in the swirling green gas, and the first of many crystals started to congeal and adhere to the metal framework.

The shattering roar of the ship's engines disturbed the peace of the field and surrounding countryside. A grazing herd of cows bolted away across the grass. They slowed to a halt as the noise died away.

As the ship accelerated away from Earth, the ship's invisibility shields, no longer required to avoid detection, shut down and the craft's sleek lines were visible once more.

On the bridge, the Doctor and Chris were looking very pleased with themselves. 'Now, ship,' began the Doctor. 'How long will the journey take?'

'Thirty-nine astrasiderial days,' the ship stated without hesitation.

The Doctor did a quick mental calculation. 'What! That's nearly three months!'

'That is at full warp drive,' the ship informed them. 'We have hundreds of light years to cover.'

'Hundreds of light years? In three months?' exclaimed Chris, flabbergasted. 'That's an incredible speed!'

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor. 'But not nearly fast enough. Ship, can you alter your own circuitry?'

'Yes, I can do that,' the ship confirmed.

'Right, then stop,' the Doctor ordered.

'Repeat, please,' the ship requested.

'I said stop. Halt.'

The ship obediently cut its engines, and applied reverse thrusters, rapidly reducing the craft's speed. Within moments they were stationary in deep space.

'What are you doing?' Chris wanted to know.

'I'm going to introduce this ship to a few new concepts,' the Doctor explained. 'Now ship, listen very carefully. Reverse the polarity on your main warp feeds. Right?'

'Accomplished,' the ship reported after a short pause.

'Regrade your deoscillation digretic synthesisers by ten points.'

'I cannot do that,' the ship objected calmly. 'The drive will explode.'

‘Nonsense,’ insisted the Doctor. ‘It will be perfectly...’ he paused. ‘Did I say ten points? Minus ten points!’ he corrected himself.

‘Accomplished.’

‘Phew, that would have been nasty,’ the Time Lord confessed, wiping his brow. ‘Now, realign your maxivectometer on drags so they cross connect with your radia-bicentric an-odes.’

‘Accomplished.’

‘Good, now this is the difficult bit...’ The Doctor paused, his eyes closed as he mentally visualised the correct sequence. ‘Now switch your conceptual geometer from ana-logue to digital mode and keep triggering feedback responses till you get a reading of 75

dash 839.’

‘Accomplished,’ the ship replied.

‘Now,’ concluded the Doctor, opening his eyes, ‘let’s see if that works. All right ship, activate all re-aligned drive circuits.’

The bridge was filled with the rising humming sound as the ship powered up its engines. ‘Something very strange is happening,’ the ship observed.

‘Don’t worry, keep going!’ the Doctor assured the ship confidently, and a loud trumpeting sound very like the TARDIS dematerialisation noise suddenly replaced the rising hum from the engines. ‘Bingo!’ exclaimed the Doctor delightedly, as the sound died away.

‘What have you done?’ asked Chris.

‘I’ve constructed a primitive dimensional stabiliser by remote control. The journey will now take a couple of minutes to anywhere,’ the Doctor explained, looking very pleased with himself. ‘Pretty clever, don’t you think, ship?’

‘For a dead man, Doctor, you are extremely ingenious,’ observed the ship.

‘Yes, well let’s not harp on that aspect, shall we?’ the Doctor suggested uneasily, and reclined on one of the couches. He grinned at Chris. ‘Well, wherever it is, we’re going there.’

‘Whilst Skagra is presumably going in the opposite direction,’ replied Chris gloomily.

‘I know. Worrying, isn’t it? It’s the only thing we can do though.’

‘Have you any idea what he’s after?’

‘Something’s niggling at the back of my mind,’ the Doctor confessed.

‘What?’

‘I don’t know,’ the Time Lord admitted. ‘Whatever it is we’ve got to stop him. Mind control is the most horrible thing. Any physical threat you can fight, but once someone has control of your mind you’ve lost everything...’ The Doctor hesitated. ‘That rings a bell. I should know the answer!’

‘It would help if we knew who “Shada” was,’ Chris added.

‘Who… or what,’ the Doctor added.

Clare Keightley awoke to find herself lying face-down on a dusty old red carpet. Shaking her head to clear it, she rose on her elbows, and promptly bashed her head against the un-derside of the tea table, rattling the cups and saucers. Staggering to her feet, she collapsed into a chair.

She had had hardly enough time to recover her wits when a figure dressed in an ancient nightgown and nightcap appeared beside her. Clare gasped.

‘What have you done with my machine?’ demanded the almost sepulchral apparition.

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Clare was lost for words, and simply stared at the pale-faced, white-bearded old man as he moved over to the control panel that she had exposed earlier. The old man fished out his spectacles and began to examine the console. After a few moments he grunted, and turned back to her with a welcoming smile.

‘Tea?’ inquired the newly resurrected Professor Chronotis.

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8

Think Tank

Skagra turned his attention to the sphere mounted on a small console. Romana watched on in numb silence. ‘Now my dear,’ Skagra explained, ‘you shall see that

though your friend the Doctor is unfortunately deceased, his mind lives on in this sphere...' Skagra placed one of his palms on the sphere's surface, and a holographic display screen sprang up by the panoramic window of the command deck. Romana was momentarily shocked to find herself represented on the screen.

Skagra noted her reaction. 'Ah, you see what is uppermost in his mind. He is fond of you,' he goaded.

Romana shot him a sour look, but said nothing.

'But not what I am looking for,' Skagra continued. 'Somewhere in his mind, I am convinced he knows the code that will unravel the secrets of this book for me.' He tapped the cover of The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey, lying on the console next to the sphere. The holographic display began to show images of the book through the eyes of the Doctor. Skagra fed the information through the computer console, and the computer super-imposed its diagnosis of each image on the screen.

So far, all it had come up with was one word: "INSOLUBLE".

Romana had been watching anxiously. 'What's so important about the book?' she inquired.

Skagra looked surprised. 'It is The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey,' he replied, as if this should explain everything.

'So?' Romana challenged.

'So what does a Gallifreyan Judge say when passing sentence?' Romana shrugged, so Skagra continued. 'I'll tell you: "We but administer. You are imprisoned not by this Court but by the power of the Law,"' he quoted, holding up the book for effect. 'That used to be quite literally true.'

'You mean that book is a key...' Romana was beginning to understand.

Skagra nodded. 'The key with which the Time Lords used to imprison their most feared criminals. Like for instance...' He broke off as another "INSOLUBLE" flashed up over a picture of a page of text from the book. More images, all from the Doctor's memories, flashed up on the screen, including pictures of Romana, Skagra, Chronotis, Clare, Chris, and the Porter, but each sequence of images, ended up with the same flashing leg-end "INSOLUBLE" imposed over an image of the book.

'He doesn't know,' said Skagra at last. 'He doesn't know the code!'

'I'm glad you realise that,' said Romana with relief. 'It's about time.'

Skagra stared at her, turning Romana's last phrase over in his mind. 'Time,' he muttered. 'About time... Yes, I should have seen that. A Gallifreyan code would have to include the dimension of time.' He turned back to the sphere, which was continuing to feed images on to the screen. 'Stop!' he commanded it. 'Find me the Doctor's last reference to 50

time. He watched intently as the screen played backwards through a fast-changing succes-sion of images, rather like reversing a video recording. After a few moments, the sequence abruptly halted and began playing a segment from the Doctor's memory forwards and at the correct speed. The screen displayed Clare and a teletext printout, in a laboratory. The Doctor's voice could be heard: "Not only is this book not a book, but time is running backwards over it." Skagra smiled triumphantly.

Romana reacted with disgust. 'You really are snooping though the Doctor's mind. I think that's horrible!'

'Quiet!' Skagra snapped. 'I think I have the answer. Come, we will try a little experiment.' Skagra picked up the sphere and the book, and went over to the TARDIS. He stopped by the police box door, and beckoned to Romana.

Romana sighed and, realising that she had little choice but to obey Skagra, entered the TARDIS. She positioned herself on the far side of the console room and watched as Skagra placed the ancient Gallifreyan book on the console in front of him. He flipped through the pages, stopping every so often to peer at the occasional page. Romana was gratified to see that he wasn't making much progress, and whilst his attention was on the book, she began moving stealthily towards the console.

Just as the TARDIS controls came within Romana's reach, Skagra looked up and snapped the book shut. 'Keep back!' he warned, and the sphere rose from the console and herded her back against the wall, where it remained hovering, keeping guard over her.

Satisfied that Romana was not going to cause him any more trouble, Skagra opened the book again, starting this time at the beginning. He carefully turned the first page.

To Romana's alarm, the central column of the TARDIS console gave a slight twitch in response to Skagra's turning of the page. Skagra was so intent on deciphering the book's secrets that he hadn't noticed. He turned another page, and the column moved again. This time Skagra did notice. With mounting excitement, he turned several more pages, and as he did so, the column moved faster. 'Exactly!' he declared. 'Time runs back-wards over the book. So I turn the pages within the time field of this machine and the machine operates. Good. And turning the last page will take us to Shada.' With a look of great satisfaction, Skagra slammed the book shut, and beckoned to the sphere.

The hovering silver globe ushered Romana out of the TARDIS, followed by Skagra.

Outside the police box, the commander of the Krargs met them.

'I have found the key,' Skagra announced grandly.

'Congratulations, my Lord,' hissed the creature.

'Make all preparations for the entry into Shada,' Skagra ordered, and the Krarg lumbered away to do his master's bidding. Skagra turned to Romana. 'And you must

prepare yourself to meet one of the greatest, most powerful criminals in history. A man the Time Lords have chosen to forget.'

With dawning realisation, Romana knew whom it was that Skagra was referring to.

'Salyavin...?' she ventured.

'Salyavin!' Skagra confirmed. 'The lynch pin to my plans.'

A newly formed Krarg heaved itself out of its generation vat and, with barely a pause to gain its bearings, lumbered out of the chamber and began making its way down the passage towards the bridge of the spacecraft.

On the bridge, the Doctor was complaining. 'Oh come on, ship! What's taking you so long?'

'Estimated docking time, two minutes,' the ship replied.

At that moment, the door slid open, and the Krarg lumbered into the room. 'Who are 51

you?' it hissed.

'Doctor!' yelled Chris in alarm, and they both jumped to their feet.

'Ah, hello there,' said the Doctor, putting on his most charming smile.

'What is it?' Chris demanded.

'I don't know,' the Time Lord admitted. He moved closer to one wall, looking for a way to get a clear run at the door.

'You are intruders,' the Krarg stated.

'Well actually,' the Doctor corrected him, 'I'm dead and this is Chris.'

'You trespass on my Lord's ship. You shall die!' The Krarg raised his gun and began to move menacingly towards them.

'K9!' yelled the Doctor.

K9 extended his blaster, and gave the Krarg a high-powered blast. The Krarg stopped in his tracks, but the moment K9 shut his blaster off, the creature began to move again.

K9 resumed firing. 'Master, I can only just hold him with blaster at maximum power,'

he reported desperately.

‘Hold on K9!’ the Doctor urged, and turned to Chris. ‘We need a power feed, any power feed.’ The Doctor crouched down beside K9 and removed his inspection panel, as Romana had done earlier.

Chris quickly located a power cable attached to the wall. Pulling one end free, he passed it to the Doctor, who attached the cable to a charging port inside K9. ‘That better?’

the Doctor inquired.

‘Affirmative Master.’ said K9. His blaster beam was now holding the Krarg at bay.

Chris studied the creature in amazement. ‘What on Earth is it?’

‘What’s Earth got to do with it?’ asked the Doctor. ‘It looks like some sort of crystalline structure.’

‘Preparing to dock,’ reported the ship, apparently oblivious to the crisis on the bridge.

‘You just go ahead,’ the Doctor assured the ship. ‘Don’t mind us.’

The ship rematerialised in space, and fired its thrusters. The sleek craft moved towards a wheel-shaped space station revolving in orbit around a large red sun. The ship came to rest on the landing platform, which sank into the outer ring of the station. A hatch closed over the descending craft.

‘Docking sequence now complete,’ the ship reported to the Doctor and Chris.

‘Right. Let’s go and see where we are,’ said the Doctor, and began edging around the Krarg.

The creature was becoming noticeably hotter as it absorbed the energy from K9’s blaster.

‘K9,’ the Doctor called.

‘Master?’

‘Keep holding him,’ the Doctor instructed.

‘Affirmative, Master.’

‘May I ask who you are?’ inquired Clare politely, as the old man wandered out of the kitchen, still wearing his nightgown, and carrying a tray of tea and crackers.

‘I am...’ The Professor frowned and began again. ‘I was...’ He tried once more. ‘I will be Professor Chronotis. Oh dear, I don’t mean to sound portentous. It’s just that we Gallifreyans have never managed to come up with a satisfactory form of grammar to cover these situations,’ he explained.

‘Look, I don’t understand,’ confessed Clare. ‘What’s happening? What situation?’

The Professor put down the tray and sat down in an armchair before replying.

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‘Timelessness,’ he said at last. ‘Standing obliquely to the time fields.’

‘Is that what we’re doing?’

‘Oh yes,’ he assured her. ‘And very grateful I am to you for arranging it.’

‘Me?’ Clare replied, still very confused. ‘But all I did was just press a button...’

‘Yes, I know. A very ancient TARDIS this. I quite literally rescued it from the scrap heaps. Not really allowed to have one, you know. Still, just as well though, isn’t it? Otherwise I’d be dead - still.’

‘Still dead?’

‘Oh yes, yes,’ the Professor chuckled. ‘I’ve been killed, you know. Only your timely mishandling of this machine meant that you tangled with my life streams at the critical moment...’ Professor Chronotis paused and regarded Clare over his spectacles. ‘You’re not following me, are you?’

‘No,’ Clare admitted.

‘Good. Think of me as a paradox in an anomaly and get on with your tea.’

‘Oh yes,’ replied Clare, remembering the tea, and began pouring herself a cup.

‘We must find Skagra...’ Chronotis muttered.

‘What? Who?’

‘He has the book,’ the Professor told her gravely.

Finally Clare began to find herself on firm ground in the conversation. ‘Ah, the book.’

‘You know about it?’ he inquired with great interest.

‘Er, well I sort of...’

‘It is a very dangerous book and I have been very careless,’ explained the Professor. ‘It is the key to Shada.’

‘Shada?’

‘The ancient prison planet of the Time Lords,’ the Professor told her. ‘They have been induced to forget about it.’

‘Yes... I... I don’t understand any of this.’

‘Then understand this. If Skagra is meddling with mind control and mind transference, he can only be going to Shada for one particular reason. And it is imperative that he be stopped.’ The Professor stood up decisively.

Clare stood up too. ‘Well yes,’ she agreed without knowing what exactly it was she was agreeing with. ‘But why? What on Earth’s there?’

‘It’s not a matter of what, it’s a matter of who,’ Chronotis told her. ‘Now, you are a scientist, yes?’

‘Er yes,’ said Clare rather uncertainly. ‘But not at this sort of thing.’

Chronotis shrugged. ‘No matter. I will need your assistance to build some equipment.’

‘This is a recorded message. The Institute for Advanced Science Studies is under strict quarantine. Do not approach. Do not approach. Everything is under our control...’ The repeated warning message was beginning to distort as it played faintly over the station’s loudspeakers. Most of the lighting within the space station had gone out, and the corridors were dirty and strewn with rubbish.

The door marked “Shuttle Craft” hissed open, and the Doctor and Chris entered the passage, treading warily in the dim light and cluttered corridor.

‘Where are we?’ asked Chris.

‘Where do you think we are?’ responded the Doctor.

‘I don’t know.’

‘Neither do I.’

‘And I don’t believe we’ve travelled hundreds of light years,’ Chris added.

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‘Why not?’ the Doctor asked him.

‘“You cannot travel faster than light”,’ Chris quoted. ‘Einstein.’

‘What? Do you understand Einstein?’

‘Oh yes,’ Chris assured the Doctor confidently.

‘What? And quantum theory?’

‘Yes.’

‘And Planck?’

‘Yes.’

‘What? And Newton?’

‘Yes.’

‘What? And Schoenberg?’

‘Of course!’ declared Chris proudly.

‘You’ve got a lot to unlearn,’ the Doctor observed, and moved off cautiously down the passage.

‘What is this place?’ asked Chris, rapidly getting over his silent indignation.

‘Ah!’ The Doctor pointed to a sign on the wall. The sign displayed four large letters:

“IASS”, and below this, three smaller ones: “ASD”

‘Institute for Advanced Science Studies,’ the Doctor explained.

Chris pointed to the smaller letters. ‘Advanced State of Decay?’ he suggested.

‘Shhh!’ warned the Doctor suddenly, listening hard.

‘What?’

‘Did you hear something?’

‘No.’

The Doctor started down another corridor. Chris followed him along the darkened, grubby passage, and then through an open doorway into a large chamber, lit by a single dim light.

‘Ah!’ exclaimed the Doctor. ‘Think Tank! Quite interesting.’

‘Quite interesting?’ echoed Chris disbelievingly, studying the array of advanced control consoles arranged around the walls. ‘This is fascinating, absolutely fascinating! Do you mean to say that all this means something to you?’

‘Well, yes, it’s all terribly simple. You see, we’re...’ The Doctor broke off his explanation, and stared into the shadows.

Chris gasped as five old men with long beards and straggly hair emerged out of the gloom. The decrepit elderly men staggered towards the Doctor and Chris, surrounding them and pawing their clothing in a wretched, brainless manner, making senseless bestial noises.

Chris shrunk back from their touch. ‘Who are they? What are they?’ he asked.

The Doctor was observing them closely. ‘Victims of Skagra’s brain drain, I should think,’ he said softly, and gently took hold of one of them. The Doctor examined the face and eyes of the old man. ‘Their intellectual powers have been stolen, but their memory patterns might remain...’ he paused, deep in thought. ‘Yes! Might remain!’

‘But if only they could tell us what happened to them,’ mused Chris.

‘Yes,’ replied the Doctor, not really listening. ‘What?’

‘If only they could tell us what happened to them,’ Chris repeated.

‘Bristol!’ exclaimed the Doctor excitedly.

‘Yes?’

‘Bristol - I’d like you to do something for me.’

‘Certainly,’ replied Chris without hesitation.

‘It won’t be pleasant,’ warned the Doctor.

‘Oh...’ said Chris dubiously.

Back on the bridge of the ship, the Krarg was glowing dangerously hot under K9’s unre-lenting blaster fire.

‘Master!’ called K9. ‘The creature is absorbing impossible amounts of energy! Master?’ But there was no reply to K9’s desperate plea for help. The robot dog was alone with the Krarg.

The old men had retreated into the shadowy corners of the room, with the exception of the one whom the Doctor had examined. The Doctor led this man over to the hexagonal cone, and settled him on one of the seats. ‘Gently, there we are,’ said the Doctor soothingly. He then turned to Chris, who was seated in an adjacent seat on the cone. ‘Bristol!’

‘Yes?’ Chris nervously replied.

‘I’m going to allow this man access to your intelligence reserves.’

‘Oh,’ said Chris doubtfully.

‘It’s all right!’ the Doctor assured him. ‘It’s only temporary. It might just allow him to function.’

Chris watched as the Doctor crossed to one of the wall control panels and activated the still functional circuits. ‘I just hope you know what you’re doing.’

‘So do I!’ admitted the Doctor. ‘So do I. Now take a deep breath...’ He moved to the cone and flicked a few switches at its base. Nothing happened. He returned to the wall controls and made a few adjustments, then tried again.

‘Now!’ he announced, and pressed a button.

Immediately, Chris convulsed and passed out. The Doctor moved over to the man next to Chris, and listened for a heartbeat. The old man’s long-nailed claw-like hands began reaching for the Doctor’s head. The Time Lord pulled away at his touch.

The man opened his mouth, and whispered one word, his voice full of revulsion and hatred. ‘Skagra!’

The Krarg was becoming resistant to K9’s augmented blaster fire. The creature was beginning to move about and becoming redder and hotter all the time.

‘Master,’ K9 called again. ‘This creature is not only absorbing energy, it is growing stronger. Hurry Master!’ K9 edged towards the exit, still firing at the creature, but rapidly losing the battle against his overheating opponent.

‘Who are you?’ croaked the old man.

‘The Doctor.’

‘What are you doing here?’

‘Oh, just breezed in,’ replied the Doctor. ‘Now, what have you been up to, hmm? Who are you all? Skagra’s accomplices?’

‘No!’ he stated emphatically. ‘My name is Caldera.’

‘What?’ the Doctor looked surprised. ‘Not Doctor A. St. John D. Caldera?’

‘The same,’ the old man confirmed. ‘You know my name?’

‘The neurologist?’

‘Yes.’

‘It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir,’ said the Doctor graciously, shaking the man’s crooked hand. ‘One of the great intellects of your generation.’

‘So are we all,’ Caldera observed.

‘What?’

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Caldera raised a hand and began pointing out his fellows, cowering in the shadows.

The Doctor went to each one and examined them briefly in turn as Caldera identified them.

‘There’s A.S.T. Thira the psychologist, Professor G.V. Santori the parametricist, Doctor L.D. Ia the biologist; and Professor R.F. Akrotiri…’

‘Some of the greatest intellects in the Universe,’ said the Doctor, somewhat awed by this revelation.

‘... And Doctor Skagra,’ added Caldera bitterly.

‘Skagra!’ exclaimed the Doctor, returning to Caldera’s side.

‘A geneticist and astro-engineer...’

‘What?’

‘... And cyberneticist and neuro-structuralist, and moral theorologist…’ Caldera continued.

‘Yes, and too clever by at least seven-eighths,’ the Doctor concluded. ‘But who is he?

Where does he come from?’

‘We don’t know,’ admitted Caldera.

‘What?’

‘But he was very impressive,’ Caldera added defensively. ‘He offered very handsome fees, so we agreed.’

‘To do what?’ the Doctor inquired.

‘Don’t you see? The Think Tank was his idea. He set it up!’

‘He did?’ The Doctor was amazed. ‘To do what?’

‘The pooling of intellectual resources by electronic mind transference.’

‘What?’

‘He conceived the project on a grand scale - but just how grand we didn’t realise - not at first - not until after we had built the sphere, and by then it was too late.’

‘Why? What happened?’ the Doctor asked.

‘He stole our minds!’

‘Grand scale,’ prompted the Doctor. ‘What do you mean?’

‘He stole our brains!’ moaned Caldera again, becoming very agitated.

‘Easy, easy,’ the Doctor said placatingly.

‘No!’ gasped Caldera, writhing about in the chair.

Chris was beginning to stir. ‘Easy... Shhh,’ the Doctor said encouragingly, and Caldera subsided.

‘The whole of humanity...’ the old man whispered.

‘What? The whole of humanity?’

‘The whole,’ confirmed Caldera, ‘but he needed...’

‘Needed?’ whispered the Doctor, leaning close. ‘What did he need?’

‘One mind...’

‘Whose mind?’

‘One unique mind...’

‘What mind?’ the Doctor persisted.

‘A man called...’

‘What was he called?’

‘... A man called...’ Caldera was clearly losing concentration.

‘What was he called?’ asked the Doctor again.

Caldera’s face creased in a final effort, and he spat out the name. ‘Salyavin!’

The Doctor’s eyes bulged and his mouth dropped open in sheer astonishment.

‘Salyavin!’ he exclaimed.

Caldera slumped forward in his chair, unconscious.

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K9 disengaged from the power cable and ceased firing on the Krarg. Spinning around, the robot dog beat a hasty retreat along the passageway towards the ship's exit. The Krarg, glowing red hot, lumbered after him.

The Doctor leaned over Chris, checking his life signs. 'Bristol?' he called softly.

Chris's eyes fluttered open, and he gasped.

'Bristol, are you all right?' the Doctor asked him.

Chris considered this for a moment, and then declared brightly, 'I feel marvellous!'

'Good, good,' replied the Doctor. 'It'll pass - you're fit. Unlike those poor creatures.'

He indicated the elderly men.

'What did you find out?' asked Chris.

'Not much,' the Doctor admitted. 'Not enough to find Skagra. Just enough to frighten me out of my wits.'

'Unfortunate phrase,' Chris observed, but before he could question the Doctor further, K9 burst into the room.

'Master! Danger!'

'K9!' said the Doctor severely. 'Why aren't you back at the...' He broke off as the flaming form of the Krarg appeared in the entranceway, its footsteps leaving a smoking trail in the corridor.

The temperature immediately began to climb rapidly in the chamber, and the four conscious old men cowered away against the far wall.

'K9! Try and keep it back!' instructed the Doctor.

'Power supplies at danger level,' replied the automaton.

'So are his!' the Doctor countered. 'Try!'

'Doctor!' called Chris, drawing the Time Lord's attention to the stricken scientists.

The Doctor moved across the room towards the scientists, but the heat from the Krarg, which had now advanced into the room, forced him back. He made for Caldera, still slumped at the cone, but the Krarg blundered into his path.

‘Doctor! Look out!’ shouted Chris.

The Doctor made for the console to shut down the power, but the Krarg raised an arm to swat the Time Lord. He ducked, and dashed back to join Chris.

The flailing arms of the Krarg were striking pieces of equipment, causing immense sparking from energy discharges. A red mist was beginning to fill the chamber, and the Krarg turned and slowly approached the Doctor and Chris, who were backed up against one wall. They could feel the intolerable heat increasing as the creature drew closer.

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9

Skagra’s Plan

‘Bristol?’ called the Doctor in a low voice, his eyes never straying from the marauding Krarg.

‘Yes?’ replied Chris nervously.

‘You still feeling marvellous?’

‘Yes.’

‘Right. Give me ten seconds.’ The Doctor edged away from the wall of the Think Tank chamber, trying to keep as much distance between himself and the Krarg.

For a moment, Chris wondered what he should do, and then summoned up all his courage and bunched his hands into fists. Adopting a boxing stance, he began advancing towards the Krarg. ‘Well come on then!’ he taunted the creature. ‘Well come on then!’ The Krarg ignored him, and instead lurched across the room - straight into one of the consoles.

The equipment crackled under the heat and the impact, and then began to burst into flame.

‘Doctor, it’s going to blow up!’ yelled Chris. He could hardly see the Doctor through the red mist, now obscuring most of the room. ‘Come on, Doctor, come on!’

The Krarg advanced on the Time Lord, who had positioned himself in front of the elderly scientists, holding his arms out protectively. The Krarg roared, and swung its arms, forcing the Doctor to dive out of the way. The Doctor watched helplessly as the creature lumbered forward, cutting down the unresisting men with a couple of sweeps of its burning arms.

The Doctor looked away from the massacre, and felt a tugging on his scarf. The air was thick with smoke as well as the red mist. The walls were now aflame. He took one last look at the rampaging Krarg and the charred bodies of some of the most brilliant men in the Universe, and then allowed himself to be pulled out into the corridor by Chris.

Coughing and choking on the acrid fumes, the pair stumbled down the passage after K9. They caught up with the robot dog at the shuttle bay door. To their increased alarm, the very fabric of the space station was starting to crackle and spark.

The Doctor pressed the button to open the door, but it remained firmly shut. Clearly the lock mechanism had already been affected. ‘It’s jammed!’ yelled the Doctor through the smoke.

‘What!’ Chris was horrified.

The Doctor dug in his pockets and hastily applied his sonic screwdriver to the door lock.

The Krarg came into view down the passage, and began moving towards them through the smoke and flame. The door slid open, and the trio rushed through. The door slid shut in the Krarg’s face.

Alone in the corridor, the creature began battering against the door and walls, setting them alight.

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Alarms were sounding on the ship’s bridge as the Doctor, Chris and K9 arrived.

‘Emergency, emergency,’ announced the ship. ‘Imminent explosion in our vicinity. Emergency escape procedures will be followed.’

‘Well just stop nattering and get on with it,’ the Doctor suggested, as calmly as possible.

The ship lurched violently as the ship's engines fired at full thrust. The Doctor and Chris were thrown to the floor.

'Not that way!' shouted the Time Lord. 'I told you how to do it! Dematerialise!'

The ship lifted off from the space station and vanished, accompanied by the sound of a dematerialising TARDIS. Moments later, the space station was consumed in an enormous explosion, instantly vaporising the entire structure.

'Good. You're learning,' the Doctor observed, relieved. 'Which is more than we're doing,' he added ruefully.

'What do you mean?' Chris asked as he sank on to a couch. He was grateful that the alarms were no longer sounding, as he didn't feel nearly so wonderful anymore.

'We're still no nearer to finding Skagra,' explained the Doctor, sitting down opposite him.

'What do you think we should do?'

'I don't know,' the Doctor confessed, running his hands through his hair in desperation.

'Well, try looking on the bright side,' suggested Chris encouragingly.

'I have - there's nothing there. Now listen to me, ship!'

'I hear you,' replied the ship.

'Good. Now I'm going to ask you once again. Where is your Lord Skagra?'

'He did not reveal his destination to me.'

'But you must have some idea,' the Doctor persisted.

'I am a computer. I do not have ideas. I obey instructions.'

'So you've no idea where he's gone?'

'I do not,' confirmed the ship.

'Doesn't the wretched man have a home to go to?' exclaimed the Doctor in frustration.

'Yes,' said the ship.

The Doctor paused. 'He has?'

'Yes,' repeated the ship.

'Then why didn't you tell me?'

‘You didn’t ask.’

‘But... Will you please take us there?’ asked the Doctor.

‘Doctor,’ confessed the ship, ‘much of my circuitry feels uneasy about continuing to accept instructions from a dead man.’

‘Well just tell it not to worry,’ advised the Doctor. ‘I’m sure your Lord Skagra will be very anxious to pay his last respects to me.’

‘Instructions accepted.’

The Doctor beamed at Chris. ‘I do hate computers,’ he grinned. ‘They’re so literal-minded. Aren’t they, K9?’

The robot dog lifted his head. ‘Master?’

Clare Keightley looked up from working on a small, very complicated-looking piece of circuitry with a screwdriver. She had let her hair down, and was wearing glasses.

‘Look, I don’t even know what I’m meant to be doing,’ she confessed.

‘Somehow we have to get this old perambulator moving again,’ explained Professor
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Chronotis, looking over the rims of his glasses at Clare. The Professor was now dressed in his usual clothes and was also working on a piece of circuitry.

‘Well, it certainly moved when I touched it,’ Clare pointed out.

‘A spasm. A mere spasm,’ insisted the Professor. ‘I just hope it wasn’t a dying spasm, because it has left us jammed between two irrational time interfaces. Time is moving away from us. Trouble is, if we do manage to disentangle ourselves I’ll have to be very careful -

otherwise I may cease to exist again.’

‘I don’t understand,’ replied Clare.

‘Do what I do,’ advised the old Professor.

‘What’s that?’

‘Forget all about it.’

Clare smiled. ‘Oh, Professor, that’s easier said than done.’

The Professor was deep in thought. ‘That man must not get to Shada!’ he muttered.

‘He must not find Salyavin!’

‘Who is this Salyavin person?’ inquired Clare.

‘Salyavin?’ repeated Chronotis suddenly. ‘He is... was a criminal of sorts. Yes, he was a criminal. But the stories of his exploits have been wildly exaggerated. He was just a hot-headed brilliant young man with a rather peculiar talent.’ He put down the piece of circuitry he had been working on, and stood up with a sigh. ‘I can’t fix this.’

‘Well, can I help?’ Clare asked.

The Professor shook his head. ‘Difficult, very difficult. To repair an interfacial resonator requires two operations, which must be performed absolutely simultaneously. And to be honest, my dear, I don’t think you have the talent. It is a highly specialised and, well…’

‘So we’re stuck?’ Clare concluded.

The Professor nodded unhappily. ‘Yes.’ He walked off towards the kitchen.

‘Well I can learn,’ she called after him. ‘I’m very quick.’ She went over to the console and studied it for a few moments, before realising that the Professor had returned, and was watching her. ‘Well? What’s the matter?’ she asked.

‘Listen to me, listen to me very carefully,’ said the Professor in low, sombre tones.

‘What I am about to do you are never to speak of, and this is the only time I will ever do it... though I swore to myself I would never...’

‘What are you talking about?’ asked Clare, now thoroughly confused.

‘Do I have your promise?’

‘But what are you going to do?’

‘Do I have your promise?’ repeated the Professor, more forcibly now.

‘Yes, yes, all right,’ agreed Clare.

‘Then prepare yourself.’

‘What for?’

‘What is that piece of equipment you have in your hand?’ asked the Professor, pointing to the circuitry that she had been working on earlier.

‘I have absolutely no idea,’ Clare admitted.

‘Good.’ The Professor sunk his face into his hands, and then after a moment of concentration, looked back up at her, with a strange fierce light glowing in his eyes.

Terrified, Clare took a step backwards. ‘What... What are you doing to me?’ Their eyes locked on each other for a moment, then she blinked and when she looked again at the Professor’s eyes they had returned to normal.

‘Now,’ said the Professor, as if nothing had happened. ‘What is that piece of equipment?’

Clare glanced at it. ‘This? It’s a conceptual geometer relay, with an agronomic trigger,

a totally defunct field separator - but it doesn’t matter. We can dispense with it if we can get that interfacial resonator working again.’

‘Splendid!’ exclaimed the Professor delightedly.

Clare put her arm around the Professor’s shoulders in a gesture of comradeship. ‘Well let’s do that then, shall we?’

They moved to the console together, but just as they were about to begin work, Clare hesitated. ‘But how did that happen?’ she asked suddenly.

‘Never speak of it,’ the Professor advised. ‘I don’t want to force you to forget.’

‘What?’

‘Come on,’ said Chronotis. ‘There is much work to be done.’

The ship rematerialised with a groaning sound alongside the dwarfing bulk of the command craft, and moved in to dock with the much larger craft.

On the command deck, the Krarg Commander finished supervising the final stages of creation of another Krarg. As the newly formed Krarg heaved itself out of the vat, the Commander went over to report to Skagra. There were now several Krargs on the command deck, some of which were guarding Romana in a corner.

‘Well?’ said Skagra, as the Krarg Commander approached.

‘We have a full complement, my Lord.’

‘Good. Then let us go,’ Skagra ordered.

Romana was watching this exchange from her corner when a finger tapped her on the shoulder. She looked round, and to her considerable amazement, saw the Doctor standing beside her. ‘Doctor!’ she said in a startled whisper.

‘Shhh!’ he replied.

‘How did you get here?’ she wanted to know.

‘These kind people brought me,’ he explained, indicating a group of Krargs behind him. These Krargs were also guarding Chris and K9.

Skagra suddenly spotted the new arrivals. ‘Doctor!’ he called.

‘Ah, hello there,’ replied the Doctor, with a cheery wave.

Skagra strode across to meet the Time Lord. ‘I am... a little surprised to find you here,’

he admitted.

‘Your ship was a little surprised to find itself bringing me,’ the Doctor replied.

‘You stole my ship?’ Skagra was incredulous.

‘Only after you stole mine,’ the Doctor reminded him. His eyes rested on the TARDIS, and he began moving towards it. ‘Ah, there she is. I hope you’ve been looking after her.

May I check? If you’ve been over-revving her in third phase…’

A couple of Krargs stepped in front of the Doctor, barring him access to his TARDIS.

‘I am curious to know how you survived the treatment of my sphere,’ said Skagra.

The Doctor turned to face him. ‘It only looks for what it expects to find. I made it look for the wrong things. We Time Lords have highly trained minds.’

Skagra smiled. ‘So I am aware, Doctor. If you have come here in the hope of interfering with my great purpose, I am afraid you will be -’

‘Great purpose!’ snorted the Doctor mockingly. ‘Ha!’

Skagra was unmoved by the Doctor’s mockery. ‘Yes Doctor, the very greatest purpose.’

‘I know what you want to do, you old slyboots. You want to take over the Universe, don’t you? I’ve met your sort before. Any moment now a mad gleam will come into your eye and you’ll start shouting: “The Universe shall be mine!”’

‘How naive, Doctor,’ Skagra observed quietly. ‘How pathetically limited your vision

is.’

‘Limited?’ questioned the Doctor.

‘“Take over the Universe”,’ Skagra quoted scornfully. ‘How childish. Who could possibly want to take over the Universe?’

‘Exactly!’ agreed the Doctor. ‘That’s what I keep on trying to tell people. It’s a troublesome place, difficult to administer, and as a piece of real estate it’s virtually worthless because by definition there’d be no one to sell it to.’

‘Such visions are for infants,’ Skagra continued. ‘My purpose is to fulfill the natural evolutionary goal of all life.’

‘Oh yes?’

‘With the aid of this sphere I shall make the whole of creation merge into one single mind, one god-like entity.’

‘You will?’

‘The Universe, Doctor, shall not, as you so crudely put it, be mine. The Universe shall be me!’

‘Have you discussed this with anyone?’ the Doctor inquired. ‘Why don’t you send one of your Krargs to make some tea? We can sit down and -’

‘Doctor, your insane witterings do not interest me,’ replied Skagra contempt-uously.

‘This will happen. It will start within hours. Once started, nothing you or anyone can do will stop it.’ Skagra turned to his Krargs. ‘Take them away, lock them up, melt down the key,’ he ordered.

The Krargs moved in on the Doctor and Chris. The Doctor attempted to make a dash for the TARDIS. ‘Run!’ the Time Lord shouted, but the Krargs managed to block his passage.

‘Then kill them!’ ordered Skagra.

The Krargs produced large energy weapons.

Romana tried to run towards the Doctor, but she was grabbed and held by her Krarg guards. She watched helplessly as the Doctor, Chris and K9 rushed off the command deck through a doorway. Several Krargs made off in pursuit.

‘They will be caught and destroyed,’ Skagra stated, unconcerned.

The Krarg Commander brought the struggling Romana forward. ‘What do you want done with this one, my Lord?’

Skagra considered briefly. ‘She will come with us to Shada. Enough time has been taken. We will leave now.’ He went over to the TARDIS and opened the door. ‘Come,’ he ordered.

10

Shada

‘Clever feint, don’t you think?’ said the Doctor, as they dashed down a long white corridor. ‘Making them think I was trying to get to the TARDIS.’

‘What were you trying to do?’ puffed Chris.

‘Get to the TARDIS?’ suggested the Doctor.

‘Where are we?’ Chris asked, slowing down to look around him.

‘Lost,’ replied the Doctor. ‘Keep moving.’

A blaster bolt exploded on the wall close by them. The Doctor and Chris halted, looked back to see the pursuing Krargs, and started running again. K9 kept pace with them. They turned a corner and found themselves facing a dead end. Retracing their route, the Doctor directed them to hide in a small alcove in one wall. The Doctor and Chris squeezed into it, and K9 came to a halt by their feet.

‘Doctor, that man must be mad, mustn’t he?’ asked Chris, when they were out of sight of the corridor.

‘Madness, sanity, it’s all just a matter of opinion,’ replied the Doctor philosophically.

‘What’s your opinion?’

‘He must be mad. But infinitely dangerous.’

‘You mean he’s serious?’ said Chris unbelievingly. ‘He can do all that?’

‘It’s possible,’ the Doctor admitted.

‘Master,’ said K9. ‘Krargs approaching.’

‘Then stay quiet,’ the Doctor advised.

‘Permission to blast them, Master.’

‘No,’ the Doctor hissed. ‘You remember what happened last time. Just stay quiet.’

The Krargs lumbered past their alcove and carried on down the corridor.

‘They’ve gone,’ whispered the Doctor after a pause. ‘Right. Back the way we came.

Quietly!’

They emerged from the alcove, and started back along the corridor. Very faintly, they could hear the noise of TARDIS engines.

‘Shhh!’ said the Doctor, straining to hear.

‘What?’ asked Chris.

‘That.’

‘The TARDIS? Surprised we can hear it from here,’ commented Chris.

‘Something odd about it,’ observed the Doctor, and then dismissed it. ‘Come on.’

Suddenly, another blaster bolt hit the wall beside them. The Krargs had found them again.

‘Come on!’ shouted the Doctor. ‘Run!’

The trio found themselves being driven by their Krarg pursuers back down the same corridor. ‘We tried this before,’ Chris called after the Doctor, as they ran. ‘It’s a dead end!’

‘Then we’re trapped,’ the Doctor called back, but nevertheless, they kept running.

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They turned the corner and resigned to finding themselves back in the same cul-de-sac, but now at the end of the passage, incongruously set against the sleek white wall, was an old wooden door.

‘This wasn’t here before,’ Chris observed.

The Doctor was in no mood to stop and question this strange and sudden appearance.

‘Get in!’ he urged, opening the door.

The Krargs were almost upon them. Chris and K9 disappeared inside, and the Doctor dived in after them and slammed the door.

Laughing with relief at their narrow escape, the Doctor patted Chris on the shoulder and turned to take in their surroundings. His laughter died in his throat as he stared in astonishment.

Professor Chronotis and Clare Keightley, relaxing in armchairs in the Professor's study, stared back.

Clare was the first to find her voice. 'Chris!'

'Professor!' exclaimed the Doctor delightedly.

'Cup of tea?' offered the Professor.

'Tea?' echoed the Doctor, and grinned.

Outside in the corridor, the Krargs tried opening the wooden door then, when this met with no success, they resorted to blasting it with their weapons. Despite the concentrated firepower of the Krarg blasters, the effect was the same as if they'd tried to blast open the door of a certain police box.

The Krargs' thwarted attempts to break in were no more than faint muffled thumps to the inhabitants of the Professor's study.

'We came to the right place,' said Chronotis. 'Good. I'm so pleased.'

'How... er...?' said the Doctor, trying to find the right words.

'Doctor, how do you like my TARDIS?' the Professor inquired.

The Doctor spied the console, and went over to admire it. 'Oh ace, ace,' he assured his old friend.

The Professor joined him at the console. 'Strictly unofficial,' he explained. 'I'm not really meant to have one.'

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor, grinning. 'And what better way to hide it than by living in it, you old slyboots!'

Chris and Clare were meanwhile having their own conversation. 'Chris, are you all right?' Clare asked. 'What are you doing here?'

'How am I supposed to know?' replied Chris, equally confused. 'How did you get here? What's the Professor's rooms doing here?'

'You may well ask - but ask the Professor.'

'Doctor,' said the Professor, 'where is Skagra?'

'Out there in the ship,' the Doctor explained. 'He's got the TARDIS, he's got Romana, he's got the book...' He paused as something occurred to him. 'I thought you were dead, Professor.'

'My dear fellow, so did I,' replied the Professor cryptically. 'Now listen, if Skagra has the book and your TARDIS, he can get to Shada - and he must be stopped.'

‘Shada!’ exclaimed the Doctor, and thought hard, trying to place the name. ‘Shada?’

‘Yes, the Time Lords’ prison planet,’ Chronotis informed him. ‘You’ve probably forgotten about it.’

‘I never forget anything!’ insisted the Doctor, and then reconsidered. ‘Yes, that’s right

- I had forgotten. Shada! The Time Lords’ prison planet. Now why would I have forgotten?’ he asked himself. ‘Got it! Of course - Salyavin! Salyavin was imprisoned on Shada.

64

Skagra needs Salyavin!’ He turned to Clare. ‘Ask me who Salyavin is!’

‘Why?’ asked Chris. ‘Who is Salyavin?’

‘Oh well,’ explained Clare, ‘he was a great criminal, imprisoned centuries ago by the Time Lords.’

The Doctor seemed a little put out by Clare’s knowledge. ‘A great criminal,’ he corrected her. ‘Unique mental powers. He had the ability to project his mind into other minds, didn’t he, Professor?’

‘Isn’t that what Skagra’s doing?’ asked Chris.

‘Oh, no. No, it’s quite the opposite. Skagra has the capacity to take minds out of people, but he can’t put minds into them. That’s why he needs Salyavin in his sphere - and that’s why he’s going to Shada...’ The Doctor paused. ‘Shada. Why would I have forgotten about Shada?’ he asked himself again.

‘Of course!’ Chris exclaimed understanding Skagra’s intent now.

Professor Chronotis suddenly clutched at the Doctor’s arm. ‘He must not get there, Doctor,’ he whispered.

Skagra stood by the TARDIS console, turning the pages of the book. Three Krargs were guarding Romana. As Skagra turned the pages, the central column rose and fell smoothly, with a deep, almost melodic hum, quite unlike the noises Romana was used to hearing from the TARDIS console.

‘The key turns slowly in the door,’ said Skagra grandly. ‘The door to Shada opens.’ He began to turn the pages of the book faster, eager to reach his destination.

The hum from the TARDIS grew in intensity.

The Doctor, the Professor, Chris and Clare were sitting in the Professor's rooms drinking tea.

'With that power, Skagra's mind and Salyavin's together in the sphere, Skagra will be omnipotent,' said the Doctor gravely.

'But do you really mean he could just move himself into every mind in the Universe?'

asked Chris.

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes, eventually. It might take thousands of years, but that wouldn't matter - his mind would be immortal. It would spread like a disease.'

'It's quite a thought, though, isn't it?' continued Chris. 'Every mind working together as a single organism - a single mind!'

'Yes. Skagra's mind,' the Doctor added. 'Not a pleasant thought.'

'Doctor,' said the Professor urgently, 'We must…'

'Stop him getting to Shada, yes, I know,' replied the Doctor. 'But we can't. He'll be on his way already. And we don't know where it is.'

'Then we must follow him,' said the Professor.

'In this?' asked Chris. 'But how?'

'The same way that we arrived here,' replied the Professor.

'You followed the TARDIS's space time track!' exclaimed the Doctor admiringly. 'Of course!'

Caught by his excitement, Chris, Clare and the Professor all leapt to their feet, in readi-ness to be off.

'Of course!' exclaimed the Doctor again, still firmly seated. Taking his cue, the three sat down again. The Doctor immediately jumped back to his feet and rushed over to the control panel. 'Let's go!' he said suddenly.

65

An irregularly shaped planetoid drifted through a black void in space. The only feature of the airless, rocky terrain was a cluster of buildings featuring a large tower and a white dome. Within these buildings, the complex was confined and dimly lit. Cobwebs hung from the walls. A number of branching corridors all terminated in a central reception area.

The stillness was shattered by the abrupt materialisation of the TARDIS against one wall of the chamber. The door opened, and Skagra emerged, holding his sphere, followed by Romana and the trio of Krargs.

‘Shada!’ Skagra announced grandly, with a note of awe in his voice.

Romana looked around in disgust. ‘It looks horrid.’

‘It was built by your race. A prison planet,’ Skagra pointed out.

‘I hope you feel at home,’ said Romana.

‘Keep her silent,’ Skagra ordered, and the Krargs tightened their grip on Romana’s arms. Skagra went over to a central console in the middle of the room, and carefully brushed the dust from it. ‘The index,’ he said, and began calling up the prison records on the screen:

RUNGAR; WAR CRIMES

SEC. 5/JL

SENTENCE IN PERP.

CAB. 45, CHAM. S.

SABJATRIC: MASS MURDER

SEC. 7/PY

SENTENCE IN PERP.

CAB. 73, CHAM. L.

SALYAVIN: MIND CRIMES

SEC. 245/XR

SENTENCE IN PERP.

CAB. 9, CHAM. T.

‘Salyavin!’ breathed Skagra triumphantly. ‘Chamber T, Cabinet Nine.’ He pressed another button, and a light came on over a shadowy corridor entrance, marked “Chambers R - V”.

He turned to his three Krargs. ‘Two of you guard this machine,’ he ordered, and then pointed to the third. ‘You, bring the girl.’ Skagra turned to Romana, ‘Come, you shall meet the great Salyavin.’ He set off down the corridor, followed closely by Romana

and her Krarg escort. The remaining two Krargs took up positions in front of the TARDIS.

The corridor was as dimly lit and dank as the reception area had been.

‘This is where your precious Time Lords used to put the criminals they simply wanted to forget about,’ Skagra told Romana, his manner somewhat like that of a slightly sadistic tour guide.

‘I’ve never even heard of it,’ she admitted.

‘Obviously you forget very thoroughly on Gallifrey,’ he observed. They halted when they came to a junction in the corridor. They were presented with four entrances, each identified with a sign marked Chambers R, S, T and V.

‘This way,’ said Skagra, and set off down the passage marked “Chamber T”. Moments after they had passed through the junction, a wooden door materialised in the wall with a muted wheezing groaning sound.

Professor Chronotis turned away from the console of his TARDIS. ‘Doctor, we’ve arrived,’ he announced.

‘Good, good,’ replied the Doctor, and turned to the two students. ‘Now you two...’

‘Yes?’ said Chris and Clare eagerly.

‘Stay here,’ the Doctor instructed.

‘Oh come on,’ they protested in unison.

‘Oh shhh,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’m not at liberty to explain.’ He knelt down beside his dog. ‘K9, you can come along, but no tangling with any Krargs - unless of course you have to tangle with any Krargs.’

The Professor opened the door. ‘Hurry!’ he called impatiently. ‘Skagra will be here already! Hurry!’

The Doctor got to his feet. ‘Come on, K9!’ he instructed, and followed the Professor out of the room.

The two Time Lords and K9 emerged into the dim corridor junction, and shut the wooden door behind them.

‘The TARDIS must be in this direction,’ said the Doctor, once he had got his bearings.

He pointed back towards the reception area.

‘But Skagra will have gone in his direction,’ insisted the Professor, indicating the passage marked “Chamber T”.

The Doctor looked hard at Chronotis. ‘How do you know?’

‘I... heard footsteps,’ he replied quickly, avoiding the Doctor’s gaze.

‘If I can get to the TARDIS first, we can stop Skagra getting it back,’ reasoned the Doctor. ‘He’ll have no escape.’

The Professor shook his head. ‘But it is imperative we find him before he finds Salyavin!’ he said desperately.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor gently, ‘but let’s just exercise a little strategy, shall we?’

Chamber T consisted of a large room with a central control console. Sliding doors made of some translucent material were arranged along the walls. Vague humanoid shapes could be seen immobile behind them. Skagra, Romana and the Krarg stood at the console.

‘The prisoners of Shada, each one in his own separate cryogenic cell,’ said Skagra, continuing in his tour guide manner. ‘Alive, but frozen. In perpetual imprisonment.’ He carefully placed the sphere on the console and turned to Romana. ‘A very humane solution don’t you think?’ he inquired sarcastically.

Romana flinched from his implied accusation. ‘Don’t look at me. I’m not answerable for the Time Lords.’

‘You are a Time Lord?’

‘Yes, but...’

Skagra brushed her objection aside. ‘No matter. Time Lords will soon be irrelevant.’

He activated the console systems. ‘Before I find Salyavin I shall release some of these,’ he said, indicating the dark, shadowy shapes behind the doors. ‘They can be the first to par-ticipate in the new Universal mind.’

Skagra pressed an array of buttons on the console, and in a number of the cells, gas could be seen swirling around. The cell doors then slid open, and the inhabitant of each stumbled out in a groggy, zombie-like state.

‘It’s odd the way some days work out, isn’t it?’ Chris commented.

‘Chris?’ asked Clare.

‘I mean, there I was just...’

‘Chris,’ Clare persisted, ‘there’s something very odd about the Professor.’

‘Why single out the Professor?’ Chris asked.

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‘Well because when I was...’ Clare began.

Chris stood up. ‘I want to know what’s going on out there,’ he declared.

‘Chris, you’re not listening to me,’ Clare objected.

Clare was right - he wasn’t. ‘I just don’t like getting left behind,’ Chris continued. ‘I mean just because we come from Earth, it doesn’t give everyone the right to be patronising towards us.’ He moved over to the control panel and glanced at it enviously. ‘I admit all this does make us look a bit primitive, I mean I haven’t the faintest how it all works...’

‘I have,’ said Clare.

Chris turned to her, surprised. ‘You do?’

‘Yes. Well, at least I did a while ago.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Well that’s what I’ve been trying to tell you all along. It’s something the Professor did to me - to my mind. There’s something very strange about him.’

Chris looked thoughtful.

Skagra had released a number of prisoners. They were all standing around in a zombie-like state. Among them were: the Roman emperor Nero, notorious for his despotism and cru-elty; Salome, the daughter of Herodias who plotted against John the Baptist; Lady Mac-beth, the scheming wife of the infamous Scottish king who murdered Duncan; Genghis Khan, the Mongol ruler who conquered most of Asia in the Thirteenth Century; Boadicea, the First Century warrior queen who opposed the Romans in Britain, Lucrezia Borgia, an Italian noble woman accused of murdering her husbands, relatives and enemies by poison-ing, and Grigor Rasputin, the disreputable Russian court favourite.

All of the notorious individuals from Earth’s history had apparently escaped death and had instead been abducted by the Time Lords and incarcerated on Shada.

‘Enough!’ declared Skagra suddenly. ‘Their consciousness will soon return and we must be ready for them.’

The Doctor reached the end of the passage, and peered around the entranceway into the reception area. He saw to his disappointment the pair of Krargs standing guard over the TARDIS, and ducked back down the corridor. ‘So much for strategy,’ he said, rejoining the Professor. The Doctor noticed that his old friend had become decidedly agitated, and was anxious to pursue Skagra. ‘All right,’ the Doctor conceded. ‘We’ll do it your way.’

‘By all the suns, I hope we’re not too late,’ replied the Professor, and hurried off down the corridor. ‘K9,’ he said softly, as the dog trundled alongside him.

‘Professor?’ said K9.

‘Be alert,’ he instructed. ‘If Skagra tries to use the sphere on... on anyone you must destroy it.’

‘Affirmative.’

The Doctor came up beside the Professor. ‘I rather hope we’re going to destroy it anyway,’ he added.

Skagra was now concentrating his efforts on finding Salyavin. Each block of cells was several layers deep, so that it was necessary to remove several other prisoners to locate one further back. A Dalek, a Cyberman and a Zygon had joined the other zombified figures, and as Romana and the Krarg watched, Skagra pulled an executioner from one cabinet, and then a gladiator from the one behind it.

Finally, the cabinet that Skagra was seeking was reached. There was, as usual, the dimly visible shape of a figure behind the door.

‘Cabinet Nine,’ announced Skagra. ‘There he is. The man I have spent my life finding.

The man whose mind will reshape the entire Universe: Salyavin!’ He stepped back to the console. ‘Let us release him.’ Skagra selected a button.

‘No Skagra, stop!’ shouted the Doctor, bursting into the room. The Professor and K9

were right behind him.

‘Doctor!’ called Romana delightedly.

‘Keep away from here!’ snarled Skagra.

Chronotis hurried forward to the console. ‘You must not press that button!’ he insisted.

The Krarg fired a warning blast, and the Professor reluctantly retreated.

‘You are too late,’ declared Skagra triumphantly, and pressed the button. ‘Salyavin is released!’

Behind the semi-transparent door, the gas swirled, and then the door opened. Skagra walked over to the cabinet, his eyes riveted on the slumped, cowled figure in the cell.

The Doctor and the Professor started forward, but Skagra waved them away. ‘Keep back,’ he warned. Skagra reached inside the cell and pulled back the hood of the figure’s robes. An appalled look came over Skagra’s face. He seized the figure and violently pulled it out of the cell. The robes fell away to reveal a roughly-built dummy.

‘Salyavin!’ shouted Skagra wildly, dashing the mannequin to the floor. ‘Where is Salyavin!’

‘I escaped centuries ago,’ said a very familiar voice.

Skagra turned to face the speaker.

A figure stepped out from behind the Doctor.

The man they all knew as Professor Chronotis.

‘Now let me just get this right,’ said Chris. ‘You say he just “walked” into your mind?’

‘Well, sort of,’ admitted Clare. ‘It’s as if he just barged in through the front door and started shuffling all my thoughts about.’

‘But the Doctor said that ability was unique to the guy Skagra’s come here to find,’

Chris pointed out.

Clare nodded. ‘Yes, I know.’

Chris came to a decision. ‘I’m not sitting around any more. On your feet, Keightley.

Come on, let’s go and see what’s happening!’

They cautiously opened the door, and peered out into the darkened, deserted corridor.

‘Come on,’ whispered Chris. ‘Quietly now.’ They closed the door behind them and set off down the corridor.

‘You!’ exclaimed Skagra.

‘You’re Salyavin?’ the Doctor inquired, equally astonished.

Salyavin, otherwise known as Professor Chronotis, nodded. ‘Yes, I am. That’s why I wanted no one to come here. I wanted to live my life out in peace. To forget the stupidities of my past, forget this hateful power. I have suppressed it for years, except when it was necessary to cover my tracks. Now, go Skagra,’ he implored. ‘Leave me in peace, forget this insanity.’

‘No, Salyavin,’ Skagra replied. ‘I have you here. I have everything I need.’

‘Do not force me to use my power on you, Skagra,’ Salyavin threatened.

The Doctor suddenly caught sight of the sphere. Up until now, it had been resting on the console. Now it was in the air, and idly drifting across the room directly towards the Professor’s head. ‘K9!’ he yelled. ‘The sphere! Shoot it!’

K9 extended his blaster and fired instantly, shattering the device into many pieces. Im-69

mediately, each fragment reformed into a new, smaller sphere, one of which attached itself to the Professor. Chronotis fell to his knees with a howl of pain. The Doctor tried to rush forward to help, but the other spheres headed him off.

‘Now, Doctor,’ warned Skagra, ‘Stay very, very still.’

The Krarg tightened its grip on Romana. She yelped in pain.

‘You shall see the beginning of the Universal mind!’ Skagra announced triumphantly.

The sphere attached to the Professor’s forehead detached itself, leaving its victim slumped on the floor. The sphere glided across the chamber to join the other spheres. A beam of light passed from the sphere that had sapped the Professor’s mind to the other spheres, and then each sphere flew over to attach itself to the forehead of one of the prisoners that Skagra had released.

At this was happening, Chris and Clare arrived at the end of the corridor. They peered around the entranceway in time to see the spheres attaching themselves to the prisoners. A moment later, all of the prisoners seemed to wake up.

Skagra smiled - and the prisoners smiled in unison.

Skagra turned to face the Doctor - and so did the prisoners. They were now all part of Skagra’s universal mind.

‘No!’ shouted Chris, and rushed forward to assist the Doctor.

Skagra glanced towards Chris, as did the prisoners. ‘Sphere!’ ordered Skagra.

A sphere glided across and attached itself to Chris's forehead. He tried to resist at first, but within seconds, his mind was taken over and he joined the ranks of Skagra's small army.

'Now Doctor,' said Skagra, 'we will deal with you.'

The group of prisoners, including Chris, began to advance on the Doctor, in step with Skagra's own movements. The Doctor backed away against a wall. There was nowhere to run.

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11

Into the Vortex

As Skagra's army of mind-controlled prisoners grew closer, the Doctor called out, 'K9!'

K9 immediately fired at the prisoners, and one - the executioner - fell, knocked out by the robot dog's stun beam. Unfortunately, this did not deter the others, who continued their menacing advance on the Doctor. The Krarg let go of Romana and advanced on K9. The robot dog prepared to fire on the creature as it lumbered towards him.

'No, K9!' yelled the Doctor. 'Don't shoot!'

The dog obeyed, and the Krarg seized the advantage. Picking up the small auto-maton with ease, it threw him out into the corridor.

'Romana! Run!' shouted the Doctor, and ducked out of the way of the prisoners. Romana easily dodged the slow-moving Krarg and followed the Doctor out of the chamber.

Just outside, the Doctor almost collided with Clare. 'I told you to stay in the room,' he said sternly.

'Yes, but -' Clare objected.

'Come on,' the Doctor ordered firmly.

Clare hesitated. 'But Chris...'

'Come on!'

Romana located K9 lying on his side and returned him to an upright position. ‘Thank you, Mistress,’ said K9. The robot dog had sustained only a few minor dents in his casing.

The Doctor ran past them, accompanied by Clare. ‘To the TARDIS!’ he called.

The foursome hurried up the corridor to the reception area. As they came within sight of the police box, the two Krargs that had been left on guard spotted them and set off in pursuit.

The Doctor, Romana, Clare and K9 hastily backtracked to the Professor’s TARDIS.

The Doctor reached the wooden door first, and held open the door politely. ‘Come in, come in,’ he called, and dived in after his friends. The Doctor narrowly managed to shut the door before the Krargs arrived and opened fire on the impervious door.

‘Sit down,’ the Doctor instructed, indicating the sofa. Romana and Clare sat, and watched as the Doctor paced up and down, his head in his hands. ‘Got it!’ he muttered, thinking hard.

‘Well, what are we going to do?’ Clare asked.

Romana shrugged. ‘So far he’s beaten us on every point.’

‘He’s even got Chris,’ Clare reminded them. ‘He’s taken him over!’

‘Quiet! I’m thinking,’ said the Doctor, and sat down on the sofa between them.

‘Well he has, hasn’t he?’ Romana persisted.

‘Yes, he’s got Chris. Yes, he’s beaten us at every point, now will you let me think?’

asked the Doctor in a slight aggrieved tone.

‘Just trying to help,’ replied Romana.

‘Thank you,’ said the Doctor as graciously as he could muster, and lapsed back into 71

thought. After a few moments of silence, he spoke again. ‘It’s no good,’ he concluded.

‘What?’ asked Romana.

‘I’ve been thinking, and it depresses me. Skagra’s little zombie gang have got the brain power of the greatest intellects of the Universe shared out among them.’

This was news to Romana. ‘What?’

‘The Think Tank,’ the Doctor explained.

‘Who?’ asked Clare.

‘Never mind about that,” said the Doctor. ‘Just believe me. All the minds that Skagra’s stolen are now in the melting pot along with his own and they are all operating as one.’

‘All of them?’ asked Romana, the beginnings of a smile on her face.

‘Yes, and with the Professor’s... I mean with Salyavin’s mind in there too...’

‘Did you say all of them?’ Romana persisted.

‘Yes I did,’ the Doctor confirmed. ‘They can now control anyone... They can control everyone! They’ll be invincible!’

Romana got up, still smiling. ‘But Doctor, don’t you see what that means?’

‘Yes. Skagra’s grand plan will work. With every new mind that gets thrown in the melting pot they get stronger and stronger, till all life forms eventually merge into one new life form. Skagra as God. It doesn’t bear thinking about.’

‘Doctor?’ said Romana patiently.

‘Yes?’

‘May I just remind you of something?’

‘Yes.’

‘All the minds that Skagra’s stolen are in the melting pot,’ she reiterated.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor.

‘That means yours is in there too.’

‘Yes!’ exclaimed the Doctor, finally realising the implications. ‘Romana?’

‘Yes, Doctor?’

The Doctor got up and faced his companion. ‘Romana, I want you to do something for me.’

‘What?’

He dug in his pockets and produced a small medal. ‘Stand there,’ he instructed. ‘I want you to wear this.’ He pinned the medal on Romana’s dress. The medal had the words “I AM A GENIUS” inscribed on it. The Doctor hugged her and then saluted her. Romana saluted him back, smiling.

The Doctor took a deep breath. ‘Well now I can think,’ he declared.

Skagra and his enslaved group of prisoners marched along the corridor towards the reception area. He halted as they reached the junction, where the two Krargs were trying to batter down the wooden door of the Professor's TARDIS using brute force, without success.

'What is this?' Skagra demanded.

The Krargs ceased their hammering. 'The Doctor is in there, my Lord,' one of the Krargs explained.

'In there?' Skagra asked, unbelievingly.

'We think it is some kind of travelling machine,' continued the Krarg. 'We have tried to open it, but it stands up to everything.'

Skagra pondered for a moment, and then smiled. 'The Doctor. A poor little man, a pin-prick on an irrelevancy. Let him amuse himself with his tricks. They are merely the tiny antics of an insect threatened with inevitable extinction. We will go.' He marched off down the corridor with his army of mind-slaves. The Krargs took up the rear of the proces-72

sion.

Reaching the TARDIS, Skagra opened the door. 'Come,' he instructed, and Skagra's motley army entered the police box. Once they were all assembled in the console room, Skagra followed them in and shut the doors. 'We will return to the carrier ship,' he announced. 'There, a fleet of small craft will take each of us to selected centres of population and the great mind revolution will begin.' Skagra began to set the controls.

The reception area was filled with the sound of the TARDIS dematerialising. Soon after it had gone, another very similar noise echoed through the empty chamber as, some way down the corridor, a certain wooden door also disappeared.

The Doctor and Romana were pacing the floor, discussing their plan.

'It'll be tricky,' said the Doctor.

'And dangerous,' pointed out Romana unhappily.

The Doctor shrugged it off. 'A touch.'

'Doctor, it will be terribly, terribly dangerous for you. You'll stand about as much chance as a...'

'As what?' asked the Doctor. 'Your similes letting you down?'

'Yes. There isn't anything that will stand just as much chance as you will out there.'

‘Is that so?’ retorted the Doctor. ‘Well, I’ll just have to be very, very brave, won’t I?’

‘Doctor,’ Romana sighed, ‘it isn’t funny.’

‘Listen, I can do my part if you can do yours,’ he assured her.

‘I’ll try,’ she promised, but her voice lacked conviction.

‘You’ll be all right. You’re a genius, remember?’ the Doctor reminded Romana.

‘Clare?’

‘Yes Doctor?’ said Clare.

‘Hold on very, very tight,’ the Doctor advised.

Clare grasped the arm of the sofa and watched nervously as the the Doctor and Romana operated various switches and levers on the ancient TARDIS console.

‘Ready?’ asked the Doctor at last.

‘Yes,’ replied Romana tersely.

‘Clare?’

‘Ready, Doctor,’ she replied.

‘Hold tight,’ he said, and gripped a lever. ‘Now!’

Skagra worked the controls of the Doctor’s TARDIS, concentrating hard. His mind-slaves stood in a line against the console room walls, mimicking Skagra’s slight movements of his hands at the console with their own, operating non-existent controls in the air. Even the Dalek’s sucker arm waggled about in an approximation of the movements.

A small explosion on the TARDIS console momentarily disrupted Skagra’s concentration. He immediately began to test other controls.

‘Something’s wrong,’ he said. ‘Something’s interfering with these controls. They’re jammed.’

The only inhabitants of the TARDIS capable of responding to Skagra were the three Krargs. ‘What is the cause my Lord?’ asked one of the Krargs.

Skagra thought hard. ‘There must be something out there in the Space-Time Vortex with us. Something...’ Skagra moved to another panel on the console and operated a switch. The scanner screen activated, revealing the swirling colours of the vortex. Dominating the picture was a small, irregularly shaped brick building incongruously travelling

alongside the TARDIS. It was Professor Chronotis's own time craft. 'The Doctor!' exclaimed Skagra incredulously. 'In that absurd machine!'

The Doctor studied his readings. 'Got them!' he announced delightedly. 'Well done Romana.'

'We haven't got to the hard bit yet,' she reminded him.

'I know,' the Doctor agreed. 'We haven't got long either. Clare?'

'Yes, I'm holding on,' she replied, anticipating his next response.

'Come over and hold on to this, then,' the Doctor instructed.

Clare jumped up from the sofa, and came over to take over holding down a lever on the console.

'Now, whatever you do, don't let go,' the Doctor told her, 'because we're in for a very, very rough ride.'

In the Space-Time Vortex, the two TARDISes floated next to each other. The police box was enveloped in an opaque force field emanating from the Professor's rooms. The blue box was bucking about, trying to escape.

'A foolish attempt, Doctor,' Skagra observed, as he watched the tussle between the two TARDISes on the scanner screen. 'The force field is weakening already. In two minutes it will break and you will have achieved nothing.'

As Clare continued to hold down the lever, Romana moved another control into position.

The Doctor was finishing a long speech, whilst rubbing his temples with the Professor's back-scratcher. '... And twenty-thirdly, out there in the Space-Time Vortex, time and distance have no meaning. But here in this little, little room...'

Romana was becoming annoyed with the Doctor's apparent procrastination. 'Oh, get on with it, Doctor!'

'Romana!' said the Doctor.

'Yes, Doctor?'

'I want you to switch off the vortex shields in this small area.' He pointed with the back-scratcher to a space between the sofa and two chairs.

Romana went to touch the controls, and then frowned nervously.

‘Come on, you can do it,’ the Doctor continued encouragingly. ‘I showed you how to do it. Come on - just one little bit of timelessness and spacelessness over here behind the sofa.’

Romana swallowed her fears, and pulled the appropriate lever.

A vertical, rippling line appeared close to the area indicated by the Doctor. Space around the line began to distort, and the line wavered slightly. The Professor’s paisley-covered Chesterfield sofa disappeared into the rift.

‘Behind the sofa I said - not in the middle of it!’ yelled the Doctor.

‘I’m sorry,’ apologised Romana as she struggled with the controls, ‘but it’s very difficult.’

‘Focus it,’ the Doctor instructed, ‘steady now, just one steady line...’

The line began to stabilise, and then distorted suddenly, claiming the Professor’s tea trolley. ‘Hold it!’ the Doctor exclaimed.

‘I’m trying, Doctor, I’m trying,’ Romana assured him, and the rift stablised once more into a straight vertical line.

‘Good,’ said the Doctor with relief, and put down the back-scratcher. ‘Right, now this is a little trick I learnt from an ancient space-time mystic in the Qualactin zones.’ As he 74

said this, the Doctor edged cautiously towards the rift. ‘He made it look terribly easy,’ he continued, and stepped through the line.

‘He did it!’ exclaimed Clare in disbelief, putting her hands over her mouth.

‘Hold that switch down!’ yelled Romana.

Clare gasped, and immediately grabbed the lever again.

The Doctor suddenly winked into existence in the psychedelic landscape of the Space-Time Vortex. His body spun wildly, his features contorted in great pain as powerful forces threatened to rip him apart.

Very slowly, and with great concentration, he managed to orient himself towards a shimmering line further up the Vortex, and began to pull himself towards it. Every now and then, he began to spin, and it was taking great concentration to stop and re-orient himself...

Unaware of the Doctor's current predicament, Skagra worked to free the TARDIS from the force field. 'The field is fading fast,' he observed. 'This is a futile exercise, Doctor.'

Romana was also aware of this fact. With growing alarm, she watched the dial on the console that indicated the field strength. 'It won't hold much longer,' she observed. 'It's fading even faster than the Doctor said it would. K9,' she called. 'K9, wake up and come here.'

K9 had been recharging in a corner of the room. He came to life and glided over to the console.

Romana got Clare to hold down another control and then ducked down and opened a door beneath the console, revealing a bank of circuitry. 'Check out the sub-neutron circuits,' she instructed.

K9 glided closer and extended his probe. 'Affirmative, Mistress.' He scanned the inner workings of the console for a moment. 'Detect circuit malfunction, Mistress,' he reported.

Romana and Clare exchanged worried looks.

The Doctor was experiencing increasing difficulty. As he neared the shimmering line that was his destination, his pace was becoming progressively slower. With a great effort, he managed to get part of one of his arms through the gap.

K9 pulled away from the console. 'Impossible to effect repair in time available, Mistress.'

Romana bent down next to him, one arm stretched up to hold down a lever on the console. 'Well hold it, K9,' she said desperately. 'Stop it deteriorating.'

'Impossible to stop it, Mistress,' replied the automaton. 'I can only slow down circuit deterioration.'

'The Doctor needs every second we can give him,' Romana said. K9 moved back to the circuitry.

'This switch is getting very hot!' Clare said suddenly.

Romana got up. 'You must hold it down,' she insisted.

'But I can't!' protested Clare. 'It's getting hotter!'

Having got his arm through, the Doctor found any further progress impossible. Much as he tried, he couldn't get any more of his body through the gap in the Vortex. Instead

he began to find himself sliding backwards out of it, and there was nothing he could do to stop himself.

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Clare was now in some pain. ‘It’s burning me!’ she cried.

‘Well hold it down with a pencil,’ Romana suggested.

‘But I haven’t got one.’

Romana looked around, and spied a pencil on a nearby table. She reached out for it with one hand whilst the other continued to hold down a lever. The pencil remained just out of her reach.

‘I can’t reach it,’ she told Clare.

‘Oh, I’ll get it,’ said Clare casually, and absent-mindedly let go of her control. The console exploded, throwing Romana and Clare away from the controls.

K9 pulled back from the console as smoke billowed out of it. ‘It’s broken,’ K9 reported, somewhat unnecessarily.

The force field destroyed, the two TARDISes spun away from each other. The Doctor was also spinning through the Vortex, completely out of control. His body faded slowly away.

Skagra struggled with the controls of the violently lurching TARDIS, trying to stabilise the craft. He had summoned several of the prisoners, including Chris, to operate controls at the console. Working together as a team, they quickly brought the TARDIS back to normal.

‘Good, we make an excellent team,’ observed Skagra. ‘A concert of the mind.’ He smiled in triumph, and eerily, so did the prisoners in unison. ‘Now that the Doctor has finished wasting our time with his foolish tricks we can continue,’ he said. ‘We will shortly materialise on the carrier ship.’

As K9 performed repairs to the damaged circuits, Romana busied herself bandaging Clare’s burned hand.

‘I’m sorry,’ apologised Clare. ‘I did what I could.’

‘It’s not your fault,’ Romana assured her.

‘What about the Doctor?’

‘I don’t know,’ Romana admitted. ‘It was a very dangerous idea trying to make that crossing. He didn’t get as much time as he wanted. I just don’t know.’

‘Well, what should we do?’ asked Clare.

‘We’ll just go ahead as planned.’ Romana finished bandaging the hand. ‘There. How’s that?’

‘Fine, thank you. It wasn’t a bad burn.’ Clare hesitated. ‘Do you think the Doctor will be all right?’

Romana sighed. ‘We’ll just go ahead as planned,’ she repeated.

The Doctor slowly opened his eyes. He was lying on the floor of a small room occupied by several metal tables piled high with electronic equipment. A broad smile appeared on his face as he recognised one of the many storerooms aboard his own TARDIS. He carefully got to his feet and looked around with an evident air of satisfaction. ‘Good,’ he said to himself, and promptly proceeded to search out bits of equipment, whilst clearly wanting to be as quiet about it as possible. At one stage, he knocked a circuit board off the edge of a table, and froze as it clattered loudly on the floor.

When nothing came of this, he continued his search with greater caution. Rummaging on a shelf, he found one of the bits he was looking for. ‘Good,’ he said, and then found another. ‘Good.’

He turned to a set of drawers, and pulling open the top one, found another essential 76

component. ‘Good.’ Suddenly, it fell apart in his hands. ‘Oh bad.’

The TARDIS materialised back on the command deck of the Krarg carrier ship. The door opened, and the prisoners trooped out in single file, followed by the trio of Krargs. Skagra brought up the rear of the procession. He closed the door and then stood and regarded his small army with satisfaction. Then he turned to the wide panoramic window, and looked out across the galaxy.

‘And soon,’ he murmured to himself, ‘an infinite concert of the mind...’

77

Battle of the Minds

Working at a feverish pace, the Doctor had almost finished assembling an object resembling a helmet, stuck together with bits of electronic equipment all wired into each other.

He picked up the last component, the one that had fallen apart in his hand. ‘If I can’t get this bit to work I may as well say good bye to the whole idea,’ he said and adjusted it with his sonic screwdriver. ‘Now. Once more,’ he continued, and switched on the device.

It didn’t do anything at all.

‘Goodbye idea,’ said the Doctor glumly, and despondently tossed the thing onto the table where he was working.

Instantly, it started to bleep. The Doctor looked surprised. ‘Ah! Hello again!’ He snatched up the device, and the bleeping stopped. ‘Oh,’ he said, and examined it in disappointment. ‘You’re just trying to irritate me, aren’t you?’ he asked the circuit. He adjusted it slightly, but with no success. ‘Now why won’t the wretched thing work?’ he pondered.

‘I’ll just have to see if there’s anything else that will do...’

The Doctor tossed the component back on the table, and was about to move away to search when it resumed bleeping. He picked it up. ‘You do that once more and -’ he began, and stopped when he noticed that it was once again dead. Puzzled, the Time Lord placed it down deliberately on the table, and frowned as the bleeping began again. He examined the painted metal table carefully, and experimentally removed and replaced the device on the table a few times. It only bleeped when in contact with the table surface.

‘Of course,’ said the Doctor at last. ‘Zinc and lead oxide.’ Searching a shelf, he located a laser pistol, and started to cut away a corner of the table with its beam.

K9 pulled away from the console circuitry. ‘Repairs complete, Mistress.’

‘Let me see,’ said Romana, and knelt down to inspect his work. ‘Good boy, K9!’ she exclaimed delightedly, and stood up at the console. Clare joined her.

‘Now we can go,’ Romana declared, and then hesitated uncertainly. ‘Oh, I dread to think what we’re walking in to if the Doctor hasn’t...’ She swallowed hard, and looked at Clare. ‘Let’s just do it,’ she concluded, and together they began to work the controls.

The Doctor finished cutting through the corner of the table, and attached the chunk of table on to the malfunctioning device. To the Doctor's relief, the component started functioning immediately. He then fitted the device into the complicated array of circuitry on the helmet, and regarded the finished effect with a frown. With a piece of table stuck to the side of it, the helmet looked perfectly ridiculous.

'With that stuck on my head, it won't matter whether it works or not,' mused the Doctor. 'They'll all be paralysed laughing at me.' Putting the helmet under his arm, he warily opened the door of the room, and moved out into the corridor.

78

All twelve of Skagra's mind-controlled prisoners were lined up on the command deck, as if at a military inspection. Skagra was addressing them when the Krarg Commander approached. The Commander was the only Krarg present on the command deck. The rest had been sent to prepare for the next stage of Skagra's plan.

'Are the ships ready?' Skagra inquired. 'They are, my Lord,' replied the Commander.

'Then from this moment mark the beginning of the new life, the new Universe...'

Skagra's glorious speech was rudely interrupted by the arrival of a wooden door in one wall of the command deck. Skagra looked very irritated. 'Doctor!' he spat. 'This man is like an itching flea on my skin. We will eliminate him once and for all! Come!' he instructed the prisoners. 'We will meet him.' Skagra arranged, through mental control, the prisoners in a semi circle surrounding the wooden door.

'Out you come, Doctor!' he called. 'Out you come!'

The Doctor walked into the console room of his TARDIS. 'Hello old girl!' he exclaimed delightedly, 'How've you been keeping?' He went over to the controls. 'Sorry I had to barge in through the back door like that. Have you any idea what it's like to travel through the Space-Time Vortex? Of course you do, you do it all the time. But at least you're built for it. Now,' he continued, moving to the scanner controls. 'Let's see what's happening outside shall we?' On the scanner screen, the Doctor saw the line of prisoners surrounding the wooden door, their backs to his TARDIS.

The Doctor laughed. 'Look out behind you!' he sang, and put on the helmet. 'Now, let's go and say hello.' He operated the door control.

The wooden door opened and K9 emerged. He rolled forward towards Skagra and then stopped. 'Hostile force, my Master commands that you cease your activities immediately and surrender to him,' said the small automaton.

‘He sends his dog out to me!’ laughed Skagra dismissively. ‘Stop hiding in there, Doctor,’ he called towards the door. ‘Come out and meet your fate.’

‘Did someone call?’

At the sound of the Doctor’s voice, Skagra and his prisoners spun round to see the Doctor emerging from the police box. ‘Doctor!’ exclaimed Skagra. ‘How did you get in there?’

‘What do you mean how did I get in there?’ retorted the Doctor indignantly. ‘It’s mine, I belong in there.’

‘As of now Doctor, you don’t belong anywhere at all. There is no place for you in my new Universe. You shall die now,’ declared Skagra contemptuously. He looked sharply round at the Time Lord, and all of the prisoners looked round at him in unison.

‘Well Skagra,’ said the Doctor calmly. ‘That’s a very interesting theory. Let’s try putting it to the test shall we?’ He reached up and pressed a small button nestled in amongst the array of circuitry on his helmet. Then he looked round sharply at Skagra, and all the prisoners looked round at Skagra in unison with the Doctor. He grinned, and the prisoners grinned with him.

‘Doctor!’ shouted Skagra. ‘What have you done?’ With an intense mental effort, he turned the prisoners back towards the Doctor.

‘No,’ the Doctor corrected him. ‘What have you done? You used your deranged billiard ball once too often. You forgot - I have a brain in there too. Don’t I?’ He concentrated, and the line of prisoners turned back to face Skagra. ‘Think about it,’ the Doctor advised.

The strain showed on Skagra’s face as he backed away to one end of the line of prison-

ers, and managed to turn those at his end of the line towards the Doctor. The ones in the middle were left in a state of confusion, equally drawn to both wills.

‘But not too hard old chap,’ the Doctor continued. ‘You might strain yourself. So, what was that you’ve been talking about, a new Universe, a new single mind. I think your little bunch are in two minds about that already, aren’t they?’

The Krarg Commander had been standing back, observing this mental duel. Now Skagra clicked his fingers, and the Krarg lumbered into action, making for the Doctor.

The Doctor reacted with alarm. His concentration lapsed for no more than a second, but that was all Skagra needed to turn the prisoners against the Doctor. They started to move in on him. The Doctor concentrated again, but he had lost the advantage, and the prisoners remained under Skagra’s control.

The Doctor observed the approaching Krarg warily, and then called out, ‘K9!’

‘Master?’ responded K9, starting towards the Doctor.

‘Fire!’

K9 hesitated. ‘But Master, your instructions were -’

‘Fire!’

K9 blasted the Krarg Commander and, as before, the Krarg was halted by the beam, but began to grow in heat and strength.

‘Now lay on Skagra!’ said the Doctor, recalling a line he’d once suggested to Shakespeare. ‘Let’s see the quality of your mind.’ The Doctor concentrated hard, and regained control of six of the prisoners. They paired off against Skagra’s remaining six prisoners and closed in, wrestling with each other in a slow-motion, zombie-like fashion.

The Doctor nervously eyed the Krarg Commander, and saw that it was becoming very hot and was also starting to regain mobility. The Doctor concentrated on getting the prisoners under his control to drive back the other six. Skagra was forced to back away as well, as the line of prisoners moved towards him. Skagra found himself being driven closer to the overheating Krarg.

‘A little warm for the time of year wouldn’t you say, Skagra?’ the Doctor quipped, and then added a short command. ‘Off, K9!’

K9’s beam switched off instantly, and the Krarg was free to move once more.

‘Back!’ Skagra ordered the Krarg Commander. ‘Back I say!’

The overheated Krarg backed away into the doorway of the Krarg generation annexe, but this wasn’t far away enough for Skagra. ‘Back!’ he repeated, and the Krarg retreated further.

At that moment, several more Krargs arrived on the command deck, ready to attack.

‘K9!’ called the Doctor, and this time the robot needed no further prompting. He opened fire instantly, and the group of Krargs was held at bay.

The Krarg Commander fell back in to one of the Krarg generation vats, and dissolved in a dazzling display of sparks from its overheated body.

Although the four Krargs had still been tightly grouped when K9 opened fire on them, his beam was not strong enough to hold all four at bay for very long, and already they were beginning to regain mobility.

K9’s predicament was the first thing Romana noticed as she poked her head out of the wooden door of the Professor’s TARDIS. She was relieved to see that the Doctor was

alive, but at the same time saw that unless the Krargs could be dealt with, he stood little chance of defeating Skagra. She began to make her way unnoticed towards the Krarg generation annexe, and reached it in time to see the final stages of the Krarg Commander's dissolution. This gave her an idea.

As soon as the Krarg had completely dissolved, she heaved at the edge of the vat, tip-80

ping it over on its side so that the heavy green gas spilled out across the floor in great roll-ing clouds. Moving on, she repeated the same action with the other vats in the annexe, and then discovered a main feedpipe connected to the vats. Romana ripped the pipe out, and let the gas stream from the nozzle.

Nodding with satisfaction, she then turned her attention to the generation control unit, and pulled out a couple of long, trailing cables from it. Pulling these behind her, Romana left the annexe and retraced her steps to the wooden door.

Out on the command deck, the tables had been turned on the Doctor, and Skagra was forcing him and his line of prisoners back towards the group of now burning Krargs.

'Clare!' called Romana urgently. 'Clare!'

Clare emerged cautiously from the doorway, and Romana handed her one of the cables. Romana began giving Clare instructions.

The Doctor, meanwhile, was being forced closer and closer to the Krargs. It was becoming hard to concentrate in the stifling heat emanating from the creatures. Eventually he was forced to call K9 off. 'K9!' he yelled. 'Stop firing.'

K9 stopped, and the Krargs lumbered into life, moving even closer to the Doctor. They were almost upon him.

Unnoticed, Romana and Clare had separated, and had moved around the room so that they were on opposite sides of the command deck. 'Now!' shouted Romana. She and Clare plunged the ends of the cables into the dense green fog, which now blanketed the floor of the entire command deck.

Almost immediately, the Krargs began to spark and melt like snowmen on a midsum-mer's day.

Skagra looked appalled, and in that moment, lost all concentration.

The prisoners ceased wrestling with each other as they all fell under the Doctor's mental control, and reformed into a solid phalanx against Skagra. He tried to resist, but his mind was fatigued. He backed away, trying to regain control, but to no avail.

'Want to call half time, Skagra?' inquired the Doctor. 'We can have a short break if you like, few slices of lemon - perk you up no end.'

Without speaking, Skagra turned and fled through the doorway leading to the corridors of the carrier ship. He didn't stop running until he reached a hatchway marked "Airlock", and opened it.

Once through the airlock, he entered his own, smaller spaceship. As he raced up the corridor towards the bridge, he called out, 'Ship! Take off instantly! Instantly do you hear?'

The spinning cube of light appeared, engulfing him. Skagra was astonished to find himself deposited in the prison cell of his ship. He started yelling and beating at the walls.

'Ship! Let me out of here! I am your Lord Skagra! Let me out! Take off!'

'I am afraid I can no longer accept your orders,' said the ship. 'You are an enemy of my Lord, the Doctor.'

'I am your Lord,' replied Skagra. 'I built you! Release me I command you!'

'Do you know the Doctor well?' inquired the ship calmly. 'He is a wonderful man. He has done the most wonderful things to my circuitry.'

'Release me!' howled Skagra.

'Truly wonderful,' continued the ship. 'If you like, I will tell you all about him...'

'Let me out!'

Once the Doctor had relinquished control over the minds of the prisoners, the spheres dropped to the floor and the prisoners all lapsed into unconsciousness.

81

Clare was examining Chris. 'He'll be all right,' she said with relief. 'How are the others?'

Romana looked up from her examination of the prisoners. 'They're all in shock, but no serious damage. Though I hate to think what would have happened to them if the tug of war had carried on much longer.'

The Doctor sat cross-legged on the floor, seeming none the worse for his ordeal. He had a couple of the spheres dissected and laid out in front of him. 'They wouldn't have been the only ones in trouble,' he added. 'This is in a fearful mess.'

'Can you unscramble them all?' inquired Romana.

‘Yes. It’ll take a few hours but they’ll all get their own minds back.’

‘What’ll you do with them then?’

‘Take them back to Shada, of course,’ replied the Doctor, as if there was never any doubt.

‘What - put them back in a forgotten prison?’

‘Let the Time Lords sort it out,’ the Doctor advised. ‘I’m not going to play judge and jury. It was only forgotten about because Salyavin made us forget. He didn’t want his escape to be discovered. That must be why he stole the book and left Gallifrey.’

‘And he called you to take it back because he thought he was near the end of his life,’

surmised Romana. ‘Do you suppose he is still alive?’

‘We’ll find out,’ the Doctor assured her. ‘In Shada. Come on, I need your help with this...’

There was a lot to be done, thought the Doctor, as Romana settled down to assist him with the spheres. Once that job was done, the minds would have to be restored to their correct and rightful owners - those that were still alive, that is - and the prisoners put back in their cells on Shada. The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey was best left on Shada as well, with a message for the Time Lords. Shada was also probably the most appropriate place to deposit Skagra - where the Time Lords could deal with him - and there was also the small matter of persuading Skagra’s ship to ‘unlearn’ a few things about temporal engineering...

There was certainly a lot to be done.

Epilogue

The man from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary regarded the little porter with an expression of disbelief. ‘Stolen a room?’ he repeated.

Wilkin shrugged. ‘That is the only way I can describe it.’

The policeman followed the porter across the courtyard of St Cedd’s College. ‘Yes, well you see in my experience people don’t usually steal rooms very much,’ he explained patiently. ‘They may steal from rooms, yes, but steal the rooms themselves very rarely. In fact I think, er, never is probably the word I’m looking for here sir. I mean, where’s the advantage in it? Not much of a black market in rooms is there? Wouldn’t get much for it.’

Wilkin came to a halt and faced the policeman. ‘I know it’s very difficult to understand, officer, and it’s also very easy to be sarcastic.’

‘Sarcastic, sir?’ replied the policeman. ‘I don’t know the word. Now, why don’t you run over the salient points again?’ he suggested.

Wilkin nodded, and began walking again, and the policeman trailed after him. ‘Oh well, I got to the door of the room and I opened it, and beyond it there was nothing.’

‘Nothing at all, sir?’

‘Absolutely nothing at all,’ confirmed the porter. Then he reconsidered. ‘Well, nothing except for this sort of blue haze.’ He opened a door, and led the way through a passage towards a staircase.

‘Ah, well,’ replied the policeman knowingly. ‘You see, a blue haze could be the sort of vital clue that we are searching for.’

Wilkin caught his implied meaning instantly, and turned to the policeman when he reached the stair landing. ‘And I was not drinking,’ he insisted.

The policeman refrained from saying anything else until they reached their destination.

The porter showed him to a door in a hall on the second floor of the building.

‘And this is the famous door, is it sir?’ the officer inquired.

‘Yes.’

‘Behind which you saw your blue haze?’

Wilkin made a concerted effort to remain polite. ‘Yes.’

The policeman looked at the porter for a moment, and then knocked on the door.

‘Come in!’ called a voice from within.

The policeman gave Wilkin a hard stare, and then opened the door into Professor Chronotis’s study. ‘Well sir,’ he said. ‘Whoever took it seems to have brought it back, don’t they?’

The Doctor, Romana, Chris Parsons, Clare Keightley and Professor Chronotis were all sitting around in armchairs. The Doctor was reading aloud from a copy of Charles Dick-ens’ The Old Curiosity Shop: ‘“‘Her little homely dress, her favourite!’ cried the old man, pressing it to his breast, and patting it with his shrivelled hand. ‘She will miss it when she wakes...’”’ The Doctor hesitated, as Chronotis looked up and noticed the two men standing in the doorway.

83

‘Hello? Can I help you?’ asked the Professor.

‘Routine inquiry, sir,’ explained the policeman, walking into the room. ‘A report that this room has been stolen...’

This prompted a laugh from the Doctor. ‘Stolen?’ repeated the Professor. ‘I don’t think so, officer.’ The Professor reached across to Chris with a cup and saucer. ‘Here you are - a cup of tea and some asprin.’

‘Asprin, sir?’ asked the policeman.

Chris gratefully accepted the cup from the Professor. ‘Ah, yes,’ he replied. ‘Headache.’

‘Bad night last night?’ the officer continued. Chris nodded, grinning. ‘Yes, you could say that.’

The policeman turned to the porter. ‘A lot of celebrating going on at College last night, was there sir?’ he asked levelly.

‘Nothing out of the ordinary,’ Wilkin replied, thoroughly confused.

‘The normal hi-jinks that would be then, would it?’ the officer inquired. ‘Students roaming the streets stealing policemen’s helmets and bollards…’ He stopped as he suddenly noticed a police box standing in a corner of the room. The policeman slowly turned to Professor Chronotis. ‘Might I ask where you got that, sir?’ he asked sternly, producing his notebook and pen.

The Doctor jumped to his feet. ‘Yes, it’s mine.’

‘Oh really?’ It was clear from the tone of the policeman’s voice that he didn’t believe the Doctor.

‘Yes, really,’ the Doctor assured him, and turned to the others. ‘Well Professor, this is all very pleasant, but I think it’s time Romana and I were on our way. Come on, Romana.’

Romana obediently got to her feet and joined the Doctor beside the TARDIS.

The Doctor opened the door and then turned back to the others. ‘Bye Wilkin, Bristol, Clare. Goodbye Professor - don’t worry, your secret’s safe with us.’ He waved, and disappeared inside the police box.

‘Goodbye everybody,’ smiled Romana, and followed him in.

‘Goodbye,’ called out the Professor, Chris and Clare, just as the door shut behind Romana.

‘Secret, sir?’ said the policeman, fixing the Professor with a stern look. ‘What secret would that be?’

Chronotis didn’t answer immediately. All eyes were on the police box. With a wheezing groaning noise, it dematerialised. ‘Cup of tea?’ offered the Professor, when the noise had died away.

‘Where did that police box go?’ demanded the officer.

Chronotis glanced around the room, and then assumed his most innocent expression.

‘What police box would that be, officer?’

The policeman put away his notebook and pen. ‘Right,’ he said firmly. ‘Right, coats on everybody - you’re all taking a little walk with me down to the bridewell.’

The Doctor was checking the readings on the TARDIS console.

‘How did Skagra manage to find out so much about the Time Lords? Where was he from?’ asked Romana.

The Doctor looked up, but it was K9 who answered. ‘My metabolic analysis reveals that he was from the planet Drornid, Mistress.’

‘Ah, there’s your answer,’ said the Doctor. ‘Remember your history. There was a schism in the College of Cardinals, the rival President set up shop on Drornid. They forced him to come back by totally ignoring him.’

‘And the Professor was the great Salyavin,’ Romana continued. ‘It seems hard to believe, he’s such a nice old man. I wonder if the stories of Salyavin were exaggerated?’

The Doctor rested a hand on the handle of the randomiser, and considered Romana’s speculation. ‘More than likely,’ he agreed. ‘The Time Lords over react to everything. Look at the way they treat me. I expect that one day in a few hundred years time someone will meet me and say: “Is that really the Doctor? How strange. He seems such a nice old man.”’

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THE LEGENDARY ‘LOST’

DOCTOR WHO ADVENTURE

The Doctor and Romana visit Professor Chronotis, a retired Time Lord living at Cambridge University. The Professor wants to return an ancient and very powerful book to Gallifrey – but the book has gone missing.

Skagra, an evil scientist, steals the book and the Professor’s mind – and also takes Romana and the TARDIS.

In order to stop Skagra, the Doctor must discover the secrets of a notorious Time Lord criminal, and a long forgotten prison called Shada...

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